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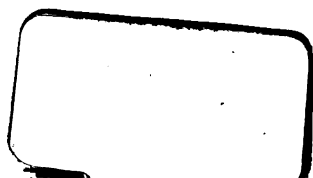
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THE COLDSTREAMS.

CHAPTER I.

Sweet orphan child, though friends are gone,
And worldly sorrows thicken fast ;
Think not, dear boy, thou stands't alone,
A prey to every worldly blast :
Tho' here thy little heart be riven,
Thou hast a friend above—in Heaven !

L.

AGNES MONKTON, after some hurried yet still
refreshing sleep, for sleep is always beneficial
to the wearied and harassed frame, arose late

VOL. II.

B

in the afternoon, and after taking a slight repast, hastened to her father's room, and found little alteration either in his general health or appearance, so far as she knew. He had (so nurse Parkes told her) roused up partially twice, and taken some nourishment, and then relapsed again into an insensible condition, and from which he never roused up. When Garside came, after carefully noticing all the symptoms, he looked sad and solemn, and as Agnes watched most anxiously the working of the worthy surgeon's features, she felt all the peril of her position and that hope of her father's recovery was for ever fled. No words were required from Garside—his anxious countenance expressed too much—to render what might be said more eloquently.—There is a tale told by the face, more awful and true than speech can tell it, and all the serious narrative was condensed in his anxious and expressive look. Mute, for a minute or more, did Agnes stand beside her father's couch, with her hands

clasped together, and there was a terrible earnestness in her gaze upon the dying gentleman, which the surgeon would wish had not been; for such grief is more alarming than a louder demonstration, and tears, even should they fall long and copiously, relieve the pent up agony of the mind. She gradually bent down beside the bed, but the speechless grief was too pitiable to behold, and Garside turned for a few moments aside, lest Miss Monkton might observe the tokens of sorrow which stole involuntarily down his cheeks. His knowledge taught him, that all hope was at an end, for the stupor was not the effect of an opiate, but the stertorous labouring of the breath from an overcharged brain! He might, thought Garside, exist for a few brief hours, or even longer, but intellect was destroyed, and nought remained of Sir Giles Monkton, but a prostrate frame. After some little time passed in critically watching Agnes, he observed her breath come quicker, and a convulsive spasm pass over her wan

countenance. She swayed to and fro, as if suffering from intense agony, and then flinging herself upon the body of her father, burst into a torrent of tears. Distressing as this grief was to him, still he was glad to behold it, for he knew well enough that it would benefit her, and that was a matter to him of great consolation.

She gradually rose up from her prostrate position, still however kneeling, and wiping away with her hair, which had fallen over the face, tears which almost blinded her, she cast upon Garside a beseeching look, as if to ask, "can nothing more be done!"

Oh! how often is this question put so eloquently to the physician when beside the hopeless sick couch—How often is he expected to have a power more than mortal, and to say as one only said, or could say, "*Lazarus come forth!*"

No one can pass through this anxious existence without much suffering, neither can

hope be lost when the breath of life is within the nostrils; for while such goes on, the relative or friend, ever clings to that forlorn chance, for forlorn it is, and such as the drowning wretch in his mortal agony grasps, when he beholds the smallest portions of the wreck, scattered into fragments by the storm blast. We have already said that Garside was a man of strong feeling, and this beseeching, almost prayerful look he beheld from Agnes, touched him to the heart. He felt all his skill powerless—he knew that his knowledge was but the knowledge of an infant, standing as it now did, between help to Sir Giles, and the Omnipotent fiat presenting itself so sternly before him. He could not speak, for his heart was full, and he bent upon her a look of deep sorrow, but one so hopeless, that Agnes at once felt its meaning and knew all was over.

There are few things the surgeon in his regular routine of duties has to encounter and which gives him greater pain, than the questions asked, when the case is known to him to be hopeless.

His step as he leaves the sick chamber—his very glance is watched, and before he can well gain the stair, such questions assail him as to be most distressing.

He knows the peril, though the friends and relatives, until his answer is given, are to a great extent, ignorant of the sick man's danger.

"I know all, yes all, all, all," said Agnes wringing her hands and looking up at Garside with the most pitiable expression of countenance, "you need not say more—Your look is enough, dear sir, and I feel what must soon take place. He is now lost to me for ever! For ever! oh no, not for ever, there is a hope of an everlasting meeting—mother!" she continued solemnly, and again pressing her hands together and looking upward, while a bright, but faint smile lit up her face, like a sun-beam passing from beneath a cloud, "if it be permitted that the spirits of the just, should hover around those left to the perils of this life, look upon your

desolate, and soon perhaps, orphan child—and Oh ! Father Everlasting, receive into Thy blessed home, the soul of an almost departed one ! Pardon, I beseech you, his transgressions, and give unto me fortitude and resignation, to support all the trials likely to beset me, so that I may be strengthened by Thy right hand against all adversaries !”

“Amen,” replied Garside, bending his head reverently, “and may your prayer meet with a response. Fear not, faint not, Miss Agnes. *He* knows the sincere heart, nor suffers the wicked long to prevail. It is better to lose him thus, than that he should endure a prolonged but hopeless existence ; for the blank of the intellectual faculties, is, of all mischief, the most terrible.”

“It *must* be terrible,” rejoined Agnes, rising from her knees, and shuddering, “death” itself is terrible, and but for the Christian’s hope, could not be borne.”

"It is borne by all, my dear young lady," said the surgeon, "and I have known the sad bereavement. I pity and can feel for you, though I rejoice to find you look higher than to man for support. Such help alone, would be like grasping the pliant rush, when sinking beneath the waters : It would have no sustaining power. Trust to Him only, who can save us by faith in His promises of everlasting mercy, to all who truly believe."

"I do, sir, I do trust, and shall not be forsaken—My mind is already lightened, and I hope I shall go through the ordeal, although the human heart is apt to faint, under worldly affliction too much."

"It does," replied Garside, "and it must be stubborn and obdurate indeed, if it could behold such scenes as this without emotion. I am accustomed to them, Miss Agnes, and yet feel them most acutely."

"You will ever be my friend?" asked Agnes,

recovering. "You will counsel me when the time comes?"

"All shall be done, that can be done to sustain you," replied Garside. "I shall never forsake you, so long as my services and advice may be useful."

"May God bless you!" replied the poor young lady, still with her looks bent upon her dying parent, "my heart, sir, is too full to say more."

"I would respectfully recommend you to leave this sad scene, Miss Agnes, I will remain, and see all the last offices paid to the departed. Let me beg, let me entreat this?"

Agnes looked up at the kind surgeon, as he made this reasonable request, and composing her troubled features to some extent, she replied, but with a faltering voice—

"I thank you, sir, deeply thank you, for all your kindness, but I would rather remain—absence would strengthen my grief, and each minute appear an hour."

The breathing of Sir Giles now became more laboured, and respiratory efforts were longer apart, and Garside plainly saw, that the end was rapidly approaching. How willingly would he have drawn Miss Monkton from this terrible scene, could he have done so with her sanction, but he found it was not to be, and he yielded from necessity, to her wishes. It would be useless to sum up each pang, or lengthened sigh, which ushered the soul of Sir Giles Monkton into another world, or to try and pourtray the over-powering sorrow of his daughter. The artist of old cast a veil over such a picture, and we have not the skill to convey so pitiable a reality to the reader, even had we the wish.

Within an hour, Sir Giles Monkton, the owner of the broad lands, hereditaments, and the stately mansion of his forefathers, passed into eternity !

The surgeon's eye was swift enough to perceive the last breath, as it faintly passed from

the nostrils, but swifter still the acute perception of the child. One terrible and earnest glance was cast upon the departed, a deep, but heart-broken cry, and Agnes Monkton fell upon the dead man's breast in a state of insensibility. Garside immediately went to the hand-bell, which he loudly rang, and with the aid it brought, the bereaved orphan was removed to her own apartment.

By Garside's direction, all the painful, yet necessary duties were performed for the deceased gentleman; and while the sad offices were being carried on, his mind wandered through a maze of perplexing thought, and which gradually centred into a more steady and subdued tone. The link was severed here, binding the child to the parent, and Garside felt, aye, acutely felt, the distressing position in which Miss Monkton was placed.

The homestead, the personalty, nay, the title, and whole property, except the money left under her mother's will, all passed away into

the hands of *Sir Gerard Monkton*. Thus it is with poor human nature. At the last there is a clinging to worldly things, yet one respiratory effort, changes the fortunes of families, and a disruption of the social fabric begins from that moment.

All the sad duties in the room where the dead man lay, having been accomplished; upon the desire of the surgeon, he was left for awhile; and he then considered, whether he should himself wait upon Colonel Monkton with the intelligence, or place upon paper what he wished to have said, (but for the cool treatment he had recently sustained), personally. He chose the latter, and finding the implements for writing, he very briefly, but respectfully communicated the death of Sir Giles Monkton to his nephew and successor. The letter being closed, he again struck upon the bell, and when the servant came, he desired it to be given into the hands of his master—*Sir Gerard Monkton*.

The man appeared staggered at the name so suddenly spoken, looked about him for a while, and then casting a glance upon the outspread sheet, (under which the form of the late Sir Giles was, in some degree, apparent) bowed, and with a deep sigh, left the room. To this poor fellow, his master had been ever kind—he was received into the house when a boy, and upon the death of his parents ; and he now felt that his homestead was no longer at Monkton Hall. Garside had heard he was a worthy and a valuable servant, and saw that he was not insensible to the loss he had sustained, and no doubt was grateful for kindnesses received. Feeling, however, that other duties were pressing upon him, he told nurse Parkes, who had uttered no word, (and for a woman and a nurse, it was somewhat unusual,) to proceed to Miss Monkton's room, when she had sent two of the domestics to remain, until further orders, within the death chamber.

CHAPTER II.

Beautiful valleys and mountain streams,
You bring back to memory, youthful dreams ;
There's not a spot in the woodland scene,
In days of my boyhood I have not seen ;
I think with delight of those hours so fair,
When I breath'e all the freshness of mountain air.

L.

COLONEL MONKTON, as he galloped along towards Dame Margery's hostel, almost with headlong speed, little knew how near he was to the summit of his ambition. Indeed, he

had scarcely reached the inn, ere he was Sir Gerard Monkton, Baronet, of Monkton Hall, in the County of Westmoreland! It had hovered in his brain ever since the interview with Master Snuffle, that such a position would soon be his, but anticipation seemed long before it became reality, neither was he aware, (notwithstanding Ephraim's insinuation,) that the goal of his ambition was reached.

The horse, from overspeed, now seemed blown, and he was pulled up and permitted to pursue his road, unmolested by spur or rein, and the rider had some minutes for reflections, and thus they went, as he spoke to himself.

"I cannot quite fathom that fellow, Snuffle. He is an astute, and wily scoundrel, of that I am assured. He may play with others, but he must be guarded with me, or he may repent it. His character appears to have acquired more decision; and his language and general bearing, have of late, mightily altered. Nay, even the tone of his voice, at times, spite of his

snuffling drawl, is occasionally varied. There is something shrouded beneath that clerical and infernal puritanical garb, savouring too much of worldly things ; but he shall be watched, and if I catch him tripping or interfering beyond the bounds of his strict line of duty, he shall quit Monkton Hall at a hand gallop. And yet he may be useful too, for he has knowledge of my thoughts, which I had hoped were pent up alone, in my own bosom—thoughts almost boundless and gnawing, at times, the inmost recesses of my heart. Agnes must be mine, yes—lovely, interesting, and proud as she is, mine must she be ! The broad lands, and resources from them, would be small enough to keep up the state I should desire, but with her fortune added to them, much, aye very much could be realized. I know she has ever shunned me, but why ? I am not an unlikely person, and my position more than equal to her own. Why then is it so ? Some other more favored suitor may

stand between my ambitious hopes. Should such be the case, and his hiding place can be found, that shall not long perplex me. I am not used to be foiled, and Bernard has been a good hound, but we have hitherto been baffled. Well, we must try scent again, and may be more successful."

Colonel Monkton had now reached the summit of a steep hill, and beneath which, in a beautiful valley, the village of Monkton was embosomed, and he could see around the broad lands belonging to the owner of the Hall. Mountainous ridges of vast proportions, looked apparently down upon the pasturage, and here and there the laurel and laurustinus grew most luxuriantly. The air of the morning was sharp, yet refreshing, and had Colonel Monkton's mind been occupied with more gentle thoughts, he could not have avoided admiring all the natural beauties so thickly thronging about him. The sunbeams, as they glanced from the sky, shed a flood of radiance around

and the beautiful lake in the distance, with the small islands studding it, was brightly shining under the gleaming light.

The heart of man must be cold indeed, when it can behold the morning, as it brightens in the heavens, and flings around each object of natural production its matin power, without pleasurable emotion. The stillness about, broken alone by the lowing of cattle, or the hum of birds, or the trickling stream running in sparkling gushes from some fissure in the rocks, and spreading forth its waters into some broad and placid lake. All these were now before the rider's view, but they were totally unheeded. He saw nothing but what was likely to become his own upon the death of his uncle, and the grasp of his intellect was such only as Mammon worshipped. *His* heart was cold enough, and the landscape, lovely as it was, looked upon with indifference. The student of nature, poor though he be, is rich in comparison with such as Colonel Monkton.

His mind yields, as it were, to the beauties scattered luxuriantly before him, and when the scenery is more wildly picturesque, he sees in each mountain pass, or hill, or valley, evidence of a Creative, yet mysterious Power, before which he bows, in silent but wondering admiration.

Colonel Monkton had been so wrapped up in thought, that he had not distinctly noted the road, and the horse, unchecked by rein, had mechanically descended a steep way, which brought the rider, not to the hostel of Mrs. Margery Pucker, but to the edge of a deep valley, which, not unlike a huge basin, lay beneath, surrounded by such mountain ridges as we have just described.

The spot was wild and desolate in the extreme, and through the interstices in the mountains could be seen one vast space of moorland, stretching to some distance, and which was visible to the rider, as the animal suddenly stopped at the edge of the ravine. Colonel

Monkton found at once that he had missed the road, and drew back the horse by a steady pull upon the bridle, from the dangerous position in which they both were placed. He then dismounted, and, looking carefully around, beheld the very spot where his soldiers had been placed, and subsequently entrapped. One-half of the valley was lit up by the sunbeams, while the rest lay in dark shadow. The Colonel looked about him on all sides, and his eye, accustomed to scan accurately, positions where military efforts could successfully be carried out, soon took in the objects presenting themselves before him. .

There was one, however, which at once attracted his attention, and his eye followed the movement of a figure, moving rapidly along the edge of the brightened portion of the valley, and running up and down the acclivities and declivities with the agility of some chamois. Suddenly, it would be lost to him, and again emerge from the recesses of the mountains, to be again and

again lost to sight. At one time it stood on the summit of a hill, midway of the valley; and the sunlight shining brilliantly upon the figure, gave it an almost angelic appearance, and it remained for a few minutes quite motionless, the slight flutter of the garments moved gently by the passing air, being the only proof that it was a living object. Colonel Monkton now recollected the account of the figure, so graphically described by Bernard and Grimstone, and which had been seen by Master Snuffle; and his astonishment may be conceived; when he himself beheld the living object before his view. Almost like lightning, it swept down the hill, and bounded across the valley; and though he watched sometime, thinking it might again appear, his hopes were frustrated. Who could it be, and where could it shelter itself amidst the desolate and dreary spot he now scanned?

No solution of the mystery offered itself

more than what had been previously known ; and though he felt sure some clue could be obtained, the difficulty was, how ! Again did he resolve in his mind, that no effort should be left untried, to achieve so desirable an object ; when, drawing back the horse to a more secure spot, he mounted, and making his way back up the hilly road, he by degrees gained the right one, and rode as speedily as he could towards the village. Coming at once up to Dame Margery's door, he gave up his horse to the man in waiting, and entered the small passage leading to the *sanctum* where the hostess usually was to be found.

Mrs. Pucker was by no means in a humour to answer any common questions, put by a common person ; but Colonel Monkton's appearance told her, he was not of that genus, and a low bend of the knees, was given, to the guest, who now honoured her homely village hostel.

"Pray are you the hostess?" asked Colonel Monkton.

"I am, so please you, sir," replied the dame, grinning and simpering, and again bobbing up and down.

"And your name?"

"Mistress Margery Pucker, given to me in lawful wedlock by that worthy man, now gone to his account, Master Timothy Pucker, landlord of the Roundhead."

"Oh! very well," said Colonel Monkton, smiling, as he observed her bridle up as she pompously announced her late husband's name.

"Pray will you send Sergeant Bernard to me, and tell him that Colonel Monkton wishes to see him directly?"

"Col—Col—Colonel Monkton?" exclaimed Dame Margery, struck of a heap by the name, and again bobbing and staring, as if she saw some spectre about to devour her.

"Aye, indeed," replied the Colonel; "and I should be glad if you would at once do my bidding, for time just now is precious."

"Yes, please you, honoured sir, I would do your bidding if I could; but the sergeant did not sleep in the hostel last night, neither has he made his appearance this morning. Corporal Grimstone is here, with Obadiah Tripe and his guard; but a more miserable set of wretches I never beheld, than I did this morning, as they roused me from sleep."

"Do you mean this, dame, or are you dreaming?" said he, as if angry, and thinking Margery was jesting.

"I mean what I state, for I hate a story, Colonel Monkton; and again I say, that Corporal Grimstone and the rest are safely within this hostel."

"Whence came they?" demanded the Colonel, hastily.

"Ah! that is more than I can tell you,

wrthy sir ; I was roused, as I told you, from my pillow this morning, soon after day-break ; and on opening my window, who should I see, but Corporal Grimstone, Obadiah Tripe, and the rest, standing beneath it, half dead with cold, and looking like so many mummies."

"This is extraordinary !" remarked Colonel Monkton, aloud, forgetting at the moment he was not alone.

"Extraordinary enough, I think ; and what is more, rude enough to call upon a creditable woman, who keeps a creditable inn, at such an hour in the morning, and in such a trim !"

"How mean you ?" enquired he, hastily.

"Why, I mean, that they looked like infants in swaddling clothes, or rather, like so many trussed turkeys ready for the spit. They were bound tightly round the arms with cords, and their muskets piled up beside them."

This statement seemed to stagger the Colonel, who fell back a pace or two, but he soon recovered from his surprise, saying—

"Of course you admitted them; and they mentioned how they came in such a plight?"

"I let them in, certainly," replied the dame; "but, as for any explanation of their condition, I have heard nothing. When I asked them for it, they sat like so many statues, and kept puffing away at their pipes. I never was more rudely treated in all my life: I gave them a comfortable breakfast, and warmed them, but they treated me shamefully. Yes, yes, Master Grimstone and Obadiah, I shall not soon forget you, depend on't."

Colonel Monkton was not displeased to find that the soldiers had been discreet enough to keep a quiet tongue in their heads, and that they had communicated nothing to Dame Margery; which would have been equivalent, had they so done, to telling the story to the whole village. He had seen Bernard, therefore suspected he had taken shelter for the night elsewhere, on purpose to avoid the garrulity of the hostess, who had chatter enough for a whole

regiment, drummers and all. Having pondered for a few moments, he said—

“Let Corporal Grimstone know that I am here—he will soon attend to my bidding.” Observing her hesitate, he exclaimed—“I presume you heard what I said—I wish to be alone.”

Upon this, Dame Margery bridled up, and would have said something rather pertly. but she remembered luckily, to whom she was about to address it, and walked away, mumbling to herself—

“Aye, aye, the old adage—‘like master like man’—the puppies—yes, yes, they *shall* have a good breakfast another time, at my cost—yes, yes, when they can—catch it. What a fool I have been, to be so gulled ! I should like to know what it can all mean ; and when I have sent in Grimstone, I will just pop into a cupboard, which is close to the wainscoting of the parlour. There I can ensconce myself, and hear all that passes. Colonel Monkton

may be very wise, and Tripe and Grimstone very crafty, but they must possess a vast deal more cunning, before they outwit a woman, and that woman, Dame Margery Pucker, the relict of Master Timothy Pucker, landlord for nineteen years of the King's Head, and then the Roundhead. I shall have the best of them yet, that I shall."

As she muttered these words to herself, with a flushed and excited countenance, she went onward to where Corporal Grimstone was located, and having delivered her message, prepared to creep into her hiding-place. Grimstone started, when he heard that Colonel Monkton was so near, and prepared to offer the best account he could, of this surprise and capture; for he knew well enough, that a rigid scrutiny would be made as to the whole affair.

He found Colonel Monkton standing with his back to the fire, and with a countenance by no means pleasing to the eye of Grimstone. Having offered the salute to his commanding

officer, (who saw him enter,) he stood stock still, waiting for any question that might be put to him. The Colonel, after a second or more, looked up, and observing the corporal, exclaimed somewhat hastily—

“Well, sir, what does all this mean? what report have you to make? How came you to be taken at a disadvantage—and by whom?”

“Honoured sir,” replied the corporal, standing erect, and endeavouring to put on the best appearance he could, but, under the stern glance he encountered, it was but a poor one, “I have to say—”

“Be brief in your answers, sirrah,” said the Colonel; “let me have the whole truth, or the consequences may be serious to you. I gave you strict injunctions to keep a good watch, and I cannot understand how you could have been surprised so completely. I hear from the landlady you were pinioned by the arms like so many felons! How came this, sir—eh?”

“I will not disguise anything, honoured

Colonel, and have to say, that the earlier part of the night was quiet enough, and we neither heard, nor did we see a human soul."

He then recapitulated all that our readers know as to the surprise, and capture, and appearance of the female. He mentioned the foolish terrors of Tripe, and which he endeavoured to shake off, but he had, with the rest of the soldiers, been infected by similar feelings, when the figure so suddenly appeared before them, and gave utterance to the words, he now, (as well as he could remember,) mentioned to Colonel Monkton. Having stated thus much, he was about to proceed, but was interrupted.

"I had supposed," said the commanding officer, looking sternly, "that I had directed and commanded, men and soldiers, who had faced enemies at Naseby and at Worcester; but I find I have mistaken the courage of those, I have intrusted with responsible duties, and that the landlady of this inn, with eight

or ten old women, would have acted as well as you have done. I have lost all confidence in you, corporal, and must confess I had expected something better from the Musqueteers."

These remarks stung the man to the very quick, and he felt totally at a loss for one word to say in extenuation. However, he made an effort to speak, when he was again checked by Colonel Monkton, who proceeded thus—

"You say, corporal, you were seized from behind, but have not mentioned by whom? Let me have some further information, for you find I am ill satisfied with your present report!"

"Honoured sir," replied Grimstone, much chafallen, and evidently disconcerted, "I should be glad enough to answer these questions as my duty requires, but I cannot do so. The advance was made so silently, that we heard nothing of the approach, the voice of the singer occupying all our attention, and the

echo from the hills drowning any other noise. The greensward was soft, and before we could offer any resistance, our arms were pinioned and tied, and our eyes bound securely by persons behind us. The morning light was not distinct enough for us to have noticed the features, even had we been able to face about, but we were certainly overborne three to one, and had no help for our sudden capture."

"How was it that the sentinel gave no signal, sirrah?"

"He did fire his musket, Colonel; but he was so terrified by the sudden and unearthly spectral appearance, that he lost command of himself, fell backward as it exploded, and the bullet from it passed upward. At this precise moment our hands were mastered."

"What course was taken, sirrah, after you were captured thus easily?"

"We were led up some ascent, and then again downwards, and again upwards, on purpose, I suppose, to confound us. We then

were roughly forced upon our knees, and had to creep onward some distance in that manner. Each man was followed by another, and armed, for I could hear the arms click as if cocked, ready for use. After some labour, our hands being bound still, we reached an open cave, and then were placed under guard for the remaining portion of the morning, the whole of the next day and night, until the following morning. No sup or morsel did we have, and were marched off at day-break, but by a different road, still with our arms bound, until we were left at the door of the hostel. We were literally famished and beaten for want of support. This is all I have to say, Colonel."

Colonel Monkton listened attentively to this statement of the corporal's, and when he connected the narrative with the one previously told by Bernard, confirmed by Snuffle, and remembered what he had himself witnessed during his morning's ride, he felt convinced

the story was true enough, and that the soldiers had yielded their minds up to the marvellous, and thus fallen into the trap so adroitly arranged for their capture. He stood for a few minutes without speaking, and poor Grimstone felt all kinds of sensations at this dreary silence, expecting some severe remarks, and possibly some severe sentence. However, he was pleasingly disappointed. Colonel Monkton looked up, and made a sign that he might leave, which he readily comprehended, and, it may be supposed, speedily acted upon.

Just as he was about to quit the room, however, a sudden crash took place, close to the spot where he stood, followed up by another and another, just as if a large quantity of crockery had been cast down by some unlucky wight accidentally—and which was the case, for Mistress Margery Pucker had entered the china cupboard, and finding the conversa-

tion ended, and that Grimstone was going, she was about to leave it quickly, in order that she might not be discovered listening, when her gown caught in a peg, upon which a row of cups and jugs were suspended on a wire ; and before she could help it, they came down, with divers dishes, plates, and other articles of a fragile kind, in one hideous smash, which, added to her dismal moans, at the inevitable ruin her curiosity had caused, roused all within the hostel, and who came running to the spot, where they found the hostess bewailing in the most piteous tones the loss of her china and other wares.

This sudden din and fearful uproar was a good excuse for Corporal Grimstone to make himself scarce, and which he did right willingly. Just at this moment, a mounted servant from the Hall rode up, and Colonel Monkton went to the door to take a letter which he held towards him, touching his hat as he dismounted. It was the one

Garside had written, and announced the decease of his uncle, Sir Giles Monkton. He read it hastily, and his face flushed a moment or two, when, not wishing it to be noticed, he called for his horse, which he mounted, and followed by the man, rode hastily towards the Hall.

CHAPTER III.

Jacopo—The plot will do then !

Andrea—'Tis well arranged and subtle,
It scarce can fail.

L.

DURING the time Agnes and Garside were watching the sick-bed of Sir Giles, there was another scene acting, in another room in the Hall, which we shall take leave to describe, for we have an ubiquitous power, and can cast our view over many places at once. There sat, close to a small library-table, in a

room of wainscot paneling, dimly lit up by a large but dustily-covered window, one in black. The fire was kept slumbering for want of raising, the person appearing to be too deeply occupied to stir it, owing to the closeness of his attention to a volume he was perusing; and as we put our head over his shoulder, (he not knowing or thinking us so near,) read, on the top of the page, the words—" *Monita Secreta.*" His eye followed the finger as it passed over the words, and the contents of the book, appeared as if they were greedily scanned and devoured, from the excessive closeness of attention given to them. From time to time the person would pause for a minute or more, and turn to some parchment close to his right hand, which he dipped into occasionally, as if he wished to ascertain that the words were correct, and that they tallied with certain instructions, given to the potent but insidious and dangerous followers of ——— *Ignatius Loyola!*

The book having been sufficiently perused,

the reader looked up, and a more vulpine glance could rarely be noticed, as it peered round and round the room. The left eye had an obliquity of vision, and though both were grey, and the usual character of them dull, yet they now appeared as if lit up with some triumphant expression, sent forth from the intellectual fabric within.

The head was almost shorn, and covered on the crown by a black skull-cap, giving the face, large and unsightly, a more prominent appearance. The book was pushed on one side, and the individual placed his chin upon his open palms, the elbows resting upon the table, as he spoke to himself.

“My instructions shall be carried out to the letter. Yes, Loyola, subtle and powerful as you were, being so subtle, you have not a disciple more zealous, more ardent, or more resolute to carry out all your instructions! Dead as you are to the world in general, in me your essence lives. Ignatius! you shall be obeyed, all

that can be brought into the fold, with worldly resources to boot, shall be drawn within the meshes, if I can accomplish my desires. They little know they have one so near them, who watches every movement, or who, like a skilful chess-player, is prepared to antagonize a move by one more skilful. All, aye, all the broad lands, and personalities, and worldly hereditaments, must fall within the clutches of our order. Nothing to check, nothing to appal, let the methods used to possess them be what they may. It is ordained, it must, it shall be carried out."

The latter words had scarcely been uttered, when two distinct taps were heard against one of the panels of the room, but the sound did not appear to affect the person lately speaking, for he merely turned his head, and said, quickly—

"*Quis homo ?*"

"*Ego,*" was the sharp reply.

"*Da tesseram ?*"

"*Monita Secreta*," said the voice, in a slow but cautious and distinct utterance.

"*Euge !*"

"*Venio.*"

That portion of the panel from whence the voice issued was pushed aside, and a person stepped into the room, carefully closing the opening after him. He was enshrouded by a large Puritan cloak, and wore a slouched hat; indeed, the costume and general appearance of the man was such as might have been worn by any one of the fanatical preachers of the day.

He removed his hat, carefully placed his cloak over the back of a chair, and drawing another close to the fire, which he now roused up, sat down, and said—

"Well, I am here—now to business, as the day-light soon wanes, and I have a long journey homewards."

"You are punctual, as usual, Chalfont," replied the person first described. "Have you prepared the parchments?—have you them with you?"

"Do you suppose I should take so long a journey without my credentials?" said the other. "Here they are—fairly collated and transcribed. The writing of each, the twin-child of the other: no mortal eye could tell the difference. Nay, were the most powerful light upon them, they would pass muster."

Here the sun's rays fell upon the table, and the sudden flash had an effect upon both—they started back somewhat—looked hard at each other, and for a moment or so a complete silence ensued. As the transient sun-beams waned under a cloud, once more did the questioner resume—

"You have erased the names I desired?"

"By no means—that would have been a clumsy contrivance, and an acute eye would

readily have detected the cheat. No, no—here is the original document, which had better be committed to the flames at once, or when you have perused it again. I have made the fair copies, and you can read them over, and compare them at leisure. The names alone of the trustees are changed, and those you wished inserted.”

“Master Chalfont,” said the querist, “you are a shrewd man, and our order has no clearer eye for business. You have acted wisely, and discreetly, and are a worthy follower of Ignatius Loyola.”

“May the saints preserve him in immortality !” replied the person called Chalfont. “He was a master intellect truly, and his followers can only step in his path, with modesty but decision.”

The first person mentioned, now read and re-read the copy, and then line by line, carefully collated it with the original which occupied some time, it being a lengthy

document. However, Chalfont interrupted by saying—

“If you have any other instructions to give, you would be wise in giving them; for I have but short space for conversation. I have already said, you can compare the deeds when you have more time.”

“First, as to the payment for this well-practised legal document. Here, take this purse—’tis weighty; but not heavier than you have deserved. Tarry for a while, and listen.”

“I am patient, and will attend,” replied Chalfont, as he placed the purse within his vest, and pressed his hand against it, to find if it was safely located.

“We have difficulties here of no common kind to master. There are Puritans in possession, and scoffing Cavaliers expectant. Both are detested by the order, and must be set aside.”

- “The document altered so adroitly by you, before I had it,” said Chalfont, “will render them innocuous.”

“I know it,” replied the other; “but though it may do so legally, we have a stubborn foe to contend with. Gerard Monkton is sullen, bold, and revengeful. Has the eye of the hawk, and the subtlety of the fox. The Jesuits lost a valuable member, when he entered the Parliamentary army.”

“Is there no help of him, no chance of conversion?”

“Not the slightest. He has no faith in marvels, saints, or invocations, and the sword and musket are paramount. He would as readily string us up by the neck, as he would cut down his enemies in the field. Gerard Monkton has no faith!”

“In whom?” asked Chalfont, quickly.

“Why,” replied the other, somewhat taken aback, “in *the Jesuits*.”

“There are many who entertain similar

opinions," said Chalfont, with a quick tone of voice; "but they are sometimes wrought upon by crafty devices, and well arranged visions."

"I should hardly desire to be one of the actors, then," replied the other; "for Colonel Monkton would not hesitate to fire amidst a host of such, if provoked. Alas! here we have no hope."

"Then he must be assailed differently. Our means must be adapted to our ends, thus are we instructed, and the most wily, but discreet attempts must be cautiously made. More stubborn spirits than he possesses, have fallen into our meshes. Have you heard any tidings lately of the youth, Sir Giles so kindly fostered?"

"Hush!" said the other; "hush! He is safe enough I hope, or at any rate, too insignificant for mischief."

"Have you stamped upon and crushed the viper then?"

"Let it suffice when I say, he is no more—

he cannot stand in the path, so that if others can be gained over or removed, our prospects are good."

"Not a chance must be left untried—no loop-hole allowed for extrication, if we can help it. How goes it with Sir Giles?"

"Badly—he gradually sinks under his disease, and though my aid has been skilfully combined with the surgeon's, yet the frame yields. Mortal hands can not long keep him.

"I should not expect they could," said Chalfont, looking hard at the other, "particularly under such *friendly* and *skilful* treatment. He must possess the stamina of an ostrich, to sustain the combined assaults long. What is the state of Miss Monkton?"

"For our purpose, bad enough. She has been instructed by the malignant Melvil, and for whom her mother entertained the highest respect. Miss Monkton's intellects are powerful, and the mind too deeply imbued with the memory of

her early training to be readily shaken. She may be a stumbling block !”

“ Stumbling blocks retard not the followers of Loyola—those who stand in the path, must be dealt with as circumstances warrant. If Miss Monkton be obstinate and a recusant, the task of dealing with her is plain enough—you understand ?”

“ I do, and have maturely considered all the difficulties I have to contend with. I shall not be easily daunted, Chalfont, and that, I think, I need scarcely say to one who is so well acquainted with me.”

“ Every point must be well calculated,” remarked Chalfont, “ for the success you may meet with, depends upon your sagacity. What has become of that said Andrew Melvil, who preceded you in office ?”

“ I know not,” said the other, “ it is now some years since Lady Monkton died, and upon the change subtly wrought upon Sir Giles, as

to his religious opinions, he left the Hall, and sought shelter elsewhere, but where that shelter is, I cannot say."

"He must be found, if possible. While he exists, our safety and prospects are poor enough. He knows too much, and no trouble should be spared in finding him out. I shall not be idle in the matter, be assured," responded Chalfont.

"These are the difficulties which have perplexed us—we have a haunt of gipsies somewhere in the mountains, and they have hitherto evaded the hottest search. There is a mystery too about the leader, which cannot be fathomed. Colonel Monkton and his Musqueteers, men used to such matters, have been upon the trail, but hitherto without success."

"Is the leader you speak of, known by any name?" asked Chalfont.

"Well," replied the other, "he is called '*Will-o'-the-Waste*,' for he scours the moorlands and sets us all at defiance. The mountains,

caves, and passes, are thoroughly known to him, and he evades the keenest scrutiny."

"You are not easily put aside from any matter you take in hand," said Chalfont, "but in this instance you seem to be out-manceuvred by a strolling gipsy!"

This was said with stinging effect, and made a deep impression. The face of Chalfont was long and pale, and the skin of a sallow hue, while the eyes, deep-set and close together, shone like sparkling jet upon the face of his companion, who returned the glance firmly, as he replied, hastily—

"I confess it, I confess it. I have been foiled, and so has Colonel Monkton and the Musqueteers. You know, Bernard?"

"I do," replied Chalfont, "a bold, dogged and resolute fellow—a sort of human bloodhound, and whose eye is clear and scent keen! Has he been employed?"

"He has," replied the other.

"With what success?" asked Chalfont.

"He failed like the rest."

"Ah! Then I must retract my opinion respecting the gipsy. He is no unworthy antagonist to baffle, and our eyes must be ever open. If he can outwit the Musqueteers, he must be a wily person to deal with. You have seen him I suppose?" asked Chalfont.

"I suppose I have," replied the other, "but if so, I can only conjecture that it *was* the gipsy," when he mentioned the struggle he witnessed with Bernard, and said he supposed it was the same figure he beheld at the window of Sir Giles's room

"This is extraordinary enough," said Chalfont musing for a few moments, "ever at hand, and not to be secured. There is more than mystery enough to excite one to unravel it. What is his general dress and usual appearance?"

"I think he wears a kind of dark gaberdine, with a large hat coming down close over the forehead, and which partly disguises the face.

He has a leathern belt round the waist, clasped in the front by a brass buckle, bearing pistols. He carries also a kind of Spanish fusee."

"Then I have seen him!" replied Chalfont, "such a person appeared to watch my steps, and was only lost sight of as I made towards the usual spot for our meeting. I missed him momentarily."

"Ah! that is the mystery we wish to find out. He appears for a minute and vanishes, and has an attendant spirit in female form, who has terrified the guard of Musqueteers, left to sift the matter by Colonel Monkton's orders, in the valley, where it is supposed they locate."

"This plot thickens round us," remarked Chalfont, "and we must have a counterpoise, or our necks may fall into a noose we had little anticipated. He must be an astute leader who can foil me long. I will confer with Bernard as I leave, and ponder well upon what can be

done, after hearing his report. Affairs cannot be safely left as they are, or this most craftily arranged plot would fail."

"It would," said the other, "but for the parchment. We have tied the hands of Colonel Monkton, and secured Miss Agnes. She cannot escape the meshes cast around her, neither can he prevent our power being exercised over her."

"It was subtly conceived, and has been, as you perceive, well accomplished. The most astute legal acumen, would not detect a flaw in the document I have prepared. It was well I had an inkling of the law, before I became a follower of Loyola. *Euge !*"

A loud knock was now heard at the door, which startled the twain, and in an instant or so, another. The voice of Master Ephraim now answered in the usual tone, and with his customary nasal twang.

"What want ye?"

"Colonel Monkton—I mean Sir Gerard

Monkton, wants to see you immediately—what answer shall I give him,” said the voice without.

“Say that I will attend upon him forthwith.”

When the servant left, Master Ephraim adroitly put on his wig, and, to a common observer, he looked much as we have described him; though his whole appearance, demeanour, and tone of voice, were widely different, during his discourse with Chalfont.

The latter now shook Ephraim by the hand, and sliding back the panel, passed into the space, and soon vanished.

Snuffle looked about him, but before he could arrange his papers, another summons came, and which he attended to; but before he left, he locked the door outside as a precaution, and placed the key in his pocket. A minute could scarcely have passed, when another panel on the side nearest the window was pushed open, and a tall figure, masked, stepped into the room,

and looked over the table. A parchment was seized, when slightly glanced at, and put within the bosom. The figure entered the space—it closed up, and the room was unoccupied.

CHAPTER IV.

Malcolm.— ——— the grief that does not speak,
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break.

Macbeth.

Act 4. Scene 3rd.

It would be an unpleasant task to describe the dull monotony of Monkton Hall during the time the body of Sir Giles remained within it, or to recapitulate the thrice-told tale of the funeral pageants; or, as the mighty poetic genius of our island calls them—

“The trappings and the suits of woe;”

for surely the truth of this cannot be denied, when we daily observe all the high and useless paraphernalia which are appended to the last duties (as they are called) bestowed upon relatives or friends. The procession, it may be said, was as dismal as such processions usually are, and the grief as profound; and within a week from the death, he who had exercised (when his intellectual powers were undiminished) a sort of despotio rule over his establishment, was left cold and silent, in the noisome and dreary charnel-house of the family!

There is a mourner, however, and in many instances, where the departed has been intensely loved, the grief is poignant. Sad, silent, tearless, amidst the sunlight of the world's splendour, sits that one, who has, probably, had the only tie severed which rendered worldly anxiety bearable. What can solace this bruised and desolate heart? We must leave the sincere Christian to find the answer.

As the procession moved slowly through the park, and so long as the least trace of it could be seen, Agnes Monkton felt in a degree that some tie of nature remained ; but when the dismal funeral peal fell on the ear, and the whole had passed away, the blank was complete, and she covered her face with her hands. For a minute or more she held them there, and when removed, the park, the trees, majestic and varied in their tints and forms, still appeared before her ; and the deer, scared away for a minute or two, by the feathers, horsemen, and other gloomy appurtenances, now returned to gambol as usual ; and the sunbeams, as they occasionally peeped forth from a clouded sky, and lit up the landscape with a flood of brilliant light, relieved by their fresh life tints, the recent gloomy pageant. Miss Monkton had overmastered her intense grief before the last ceremonies were completed, but a dull, heavy sensation seemed to creep around her heart, and she knew that her only link of worldly

relationship was removed for ever. She had no tears at her command—all had been shed when she fell on the dead body of her father, and the present and sincere hope which religion instilled into her mind, made her fortitude greater under the recent emergency, than it would have been had no such sustaining Power been at command.

She turned from the window, and a deep sigh involuntarily fell from her, as she was about to take up *her* solace, and *the* solace for all who endure worldly afflictions—the Book of Everlasting Life !

She turned to that magnificent and solemn part, from whence a portion of the funeral ceremony is taken, and was about to read it, when a letter fell from the pages on the floor. She stooped and picked it up : it was directed to her—and the writing ! She knew it—yes, she knew it, she kissed it, pressed it to her bosom, kissed it again, and again, and again, and then cried bitterly—the tears of joyful

hopes, for better and happier hours. Poor young lady! she needed many such, for her days had been hard ones, and without sunlight in the distance, would have been past human endurance. For a few minutes her emotions conquered her, and heart-drops, which trickled down her face, blinded her eyes, and prevented her reading from the letter distinctly. We will therefore tell the purport of it. It ran as follows:—

“ DEAREST AND BEST LOVED AGNES,

“ Think not that you are forgotten—do not for a moment imagine you are deserted. Those are near and around you, who watch carefully, and who will guard you from worldly misery, at the peril of their lives. They have power—they have the will, but there are reasons, which cannot at present be either spoken or written, and secrecy is *implicitly* demanded!

"Be comforted therefore,—be of a firm heart still, and trust, as you have been taught to trust, in His everlasting power to protect *His children!*"

There was no signature to this, but to Agnes Monkton's heart, none was required. The writing was known—*he* was living—he, upon whom her fond mother lavished fondness almost equal to that she herself enjoyed, had escaped the machinations of cruel men, and still had the breath of life in his nostrils. She felt her orphan condition but now poignantly and severely; *but he lived!* Wilfred was still amidst the throng of existence, and she had a protector, who was dear to her as life itself. She read the note many times over, and each perusal appeared to afford her more consolation, for it whispered hope in her melancholy condition, and she knew, that she was not without a faithful heart, who would not only sympathize with, but even share her worldly cup

whether of joy or sorrow. She again sought the window which she opened, for she felt excited and heated from her emotion, and the air of the noon-day was refreshing.

She looked around with more satisfaction upon all the old spots, familiarized by early and blessed associations. There stood, within twenty yards of the Hall door leading towards the garden, the graceful but towering cedar spreading forth its giant arms over the green-sward, which it touched gently now and then as the wind was more powerful, and again sprang upward with elastic boundings. There was the old yew avenue in the distance, masses of beech trees, firs, larches, and intermingled in graceful elegance, peeped forth here and there, the mountain ash, the laurel and laurestinus. Many of them were partially bare, from the advancing and early season, the leaves being singed and scattered by the nipping night-frosts, and lying in myriads over the grass lands on each side the park

road. All the trees were of the true style of English landscape, and the variety of tints had a more picturesque effect to the eye, as it wandered over the prospect, which had a thousand early memories to make each spot more dear.

He, who had wandered there in happier days still lived, and she fondly imagined again to mingle in her walks; and yet the tenour of his letter expressed no such probability at present. The hope existed—it was tangible—glittering in the horizon like the first morning sun-beam—brightening the sky of the young orphan's heart, and giving rest to the hitherto troubled spirit. Without that star-beam, man's mortal pilgrimage would have no resting place for the way-worn foot.

Having once more perused the letter, and again kissed it, she opened her escritoire and placed it within a secret drawer for safety. She longed to keep it in her bosom,

close to her heart, but then it might be lost, and betray the one she cherished devotedly. All her anxiety was for his safety, and the epistle, brief though it was, carefully put aside.

One of the most innocent feelings clinging to the heart, is the fondness for some trifling memento of a loved one when absent: It keeps up a hallowed recollection of all the kindnesses we have received—it preserves within that shrine of human affection all the purity of a first love, which, though often evanescent, is, when sincere, one of the strongest and most enduring passions of that most miraculous organ!

We have already depicted (so far as our powers permitted) the love Agnes felt for the partner of her younger days, and the mental agony she endured at his prolonged absence, but which in some measure had been greatly softened, by the letter Snuffle had sent, and in which he had craftily, and certainly suc-

cessfully imitated Wilfred's hand-writing. Agnes still thought that letter truthful, or she would not have remained satisfied; and to a certain extent, the machinations of Master Ephraim had been successful. She sat beside the window and pondered upon the uncertainty of her position. No human soul save one (and that one under peril of visiting her) had she, to whom she could cling—no hand to grasp, save the faithful one of the kind Garside, and he to an extent, was powerless to protect her, should emergency arise for his interference.

It was enough to press heavily on any heart and much more so upon that of an orphan-girl. Tears fell slowly down her cheeks, and a sensation of suffocation seemed to overcome her, for the reminiscences of happier times were powerful, and the melancholy procession she had lately beheld, was enough to oppress the most vigorous intellect. She slowly fell on her knees, and though the grief drops still

streamed silently down her face, prayed inwardly to One, who can alone sustain us in the painful worldly trials, and it would be well for our common nature, were they as truthfully uttered. When she arose, her heart felt lightened, and the mind seemed to rise, and as it were, mingle amidst a purer and less worldly atmosphere. She paused, and again advanced towards her escritoire, and took out a packet of letters—many of them from her mother, when absent from the Hall for change of air or scene, during sickness. They breathed the fondest affection—they gave those excellent admonitions as to another condition, to be attained by all, who are of a contrite heart, and spoke of her own sickness, as if she expected a brief sojourn in this anxious world. They had been read and re-read, but never without comfort. She felt almost as if she held communion with the departed, and that the spirit of a protecting power hovered around her—that each thought was known, and answer-

ing words of hope and consolation would at such moments float in the air, and that voices of more than mortal sweetness mingled in communion! Such fancies have found entrance within the highest intellects, and though perhaps, visionary, they cast a soothing influence over the mind and have a sustaining power.

As she once more turned to the window, she fancied these were two figures in the distance and sheltered from general observation amidst the shrubbery--she looked more intently--the objects were distinct enough, and both seemed to recognize her, for a handkerchief fluttered in the air, waved by one of them. Oh! that they were nearer that she might recognise them, for a strange and anxious feeling made her think they were friends. She waved her hand in return, and again was the handkerchief raised, and a similar signal given. She was about to renew the notice of it with a scarf close by, but she heard the hall-door open, and Snuffle with a

stranger passed forth, and came along the path close beneath her window. She drew back and watched, but the figures first seen appeared as if they had noticed them, and were no longer visible. Both Snuffle and his companion seemed to be engaged in earnest conversation, and the stranger was speaking vehemently, yet still in an under tone ; so that she could not catch a word of their discourse. She listened attentively, but they were soon out of sight, and made as she thought, towards the long avenue, which [would have led them to the spot, where the persons she had first seen, were shrouded. She looked forth anxiously, and her heart beat audibly, but no trace of those she had first beheld could be detected. She had never seen the person who was in such deep conversation with Master Ephraim, and could only observe that he was tall and thin, and wore a similar habit to that of his companion. She never liked Snuffle, and supposed the stranger was some kindred spirit, and that they were

upon the same sinister errand. She now closed the window and turned towards the door, but uttered a faint scream, as she beheld poor nurse Parkes, who had knocked twice or thrice at the door, and receiving no answer, quietly entered the room, thinking her young lady was asleep.

"Bless me!" said the old dame, "bless me, Miss Agnes, what's the matter? Surely you need not be terrified at the sight of me."

"No, nurse, I was not terrified at you—but my mind has been so agitated, and my nerves so sorely tried lately, that I fear I shall start even at my own shadow."

"Come, come, dear Miss Agnes, have a little heart—all things are for the best, and we must submit. I came to ask, if you would have some refreshment, for you have not tasted sup or morsel this day? You *must* want it—I *know* you must—indeed you must have it, and Susan is coming with something I have prepared, that will be beneficial—ah! here she is—come Susan, bring the small table close

when you have put down the tray, and your mistress will be persuaded to do as I wish her ! There, there, that's a good girl, that will do, now you can go to your other duties, and I will ring the bell if you are wanted."

The girl then left the room, when the old lady said—

"Now, Miss Agnes—I have prepared this small repast on purpose to tempt you ; I dressed it myself, and I know it will be nice."

As the cover was removed, a savory odour spread over the room, and which would have made a gourmand's mouth water, but Agnes had no appetite. Her mind had been too much perplexed, and to the astonishment of the kind hearted nurse, she shook her head as much as to say—

"I really cannot take it?"

"What ! not a morsel—not taste my cooking ! well then take some cake and a glass of

canary—that you must certainly have, and it will recruit you. I know it will, it has often done me good. Do I pray, dear Miss Agnes?”

“Well then,” said Miss Monkton, “if it will satisfy you, I will take a small portion of the wine and cake. I do not want it, nurse; but I do not like to refuse, after you have so kindly had them brought.”

“I will take a little refreshment myself,” said the old dame, and she drank off a glass of wine with the relish of an Epicure, and seemed as if she would have liked another, by the askance look she gave the bottle, though her modesty forbade the liberty, in her young lady’s presence: looking round carefully, she said—

“Master Snuffle and a stranger have been here, Miss Agnes—I could not see his face, for he kept it close under his broad hat, and looked downwards—I don’t like such persons—I like to have a fair look, face to face, and am

always suspicious of such gentry ; they have had a long interview with Colonel—dear me I forget, Sir Gerard Monkton, in the library—the door was closely shut ; but it was a very stormy meeting ; for I heard the master's voice loud above the others, and I am sure he was angry, aye, very angry indeed."

"What makes you think so?" asked Agnes.

"Because I watched them as they came out; for I was behind the large screen in the hall, near the door."

"You forgot yourself strangely, Nurse Parkes, in being a listener in matters which scarcely concerned you," said Agnes.

"Don't be angry with me—don't be angry with me, Miss Agnes ; but Master Garside told me to be on the alert, and I thought some mischief was brewing against you, and the good surgeon gave no particular directions. I, however, did hear something."

"What did you hear?" asked Agnes, more kindly.

"Why," here the old lady again looked round the room as if fearful of being overheard, and answered gently.

"When Master Snuffle came out with the other person, he spoke as he went past me, and said—

" 'Sir Gerard Monkton was ruffled, Master Chalfont, but we need not fear. Miss Monkton is safe under our controul, and the deed was beyond suspicion.'

"Master Chalfont, as he was called, replied.

" 'I told you it could not be detected—Sir Gerard must chew the cud, and though he may bluster now, we shall cool him, depend on't.'

"I heard no more ; for they passed out of the Hall-door, and went into the garden."

"What controul can Master Snuffle have over my actions, nurse ? He is a person I never liked, and has ever been met with coolness, when offers of assistance have been made."

"I know not, dear lady," replied the old dame; "but I was, I confess, staggered. I saw the features well, and I know him; but he spoke in another voice, and the drawling tone he usually has, was altered. It was odd—wasn't it, Miss Agnes?"

"Strangely so," said Miss Monkton, who listened attentively to what the old lady stated, though she endeavoured to hide her curiosity under a calm demeanour; but I think so ill of him, and know his crafty habits, that I keep him ever at a distance. They were but words, boastful ones, perhaps, but nothing more, dear nurse."

"I am not so sure of that, Miss—no, no, the viper, when about to bite, has an evil eye, and Master Snuffle looked devilish, that he did; I never saw such mischief in a look in my life!"

"If Snuffle be a viper, nurse, so far as I am concerned, he is a stingless one. He has no

power over me, of which I am not aware, and I fear him not. He is too insignificant to be alarming."

"Don't say so, I pray, Miss Agnes; but be upon your guard; for Doctor Garside thinks badly of him, and told me never to leave you alone with him, so long as I remained at the Hall. Had Sir Giles lived, my offices would have been required; but now, I suppose, I shall soon have the cold shoulder."

"Not while I am in the Hall, nurse," replied Miss Monkton; "your attention and kindness to my father can never be forgotten by his child. Be of good cheer, and think not you shall be discarded, while I have any influence here."

"Alas!" said the old woman, "what is the power of a young orphan lady, left in such a sad plight. You are desolate enough, Miss Agnes, and have no protector."

"Yes, nurse, One, and a powerful One; the great Being who made this mighty earth, and

all within it, has, through His Son, promised never to leave His children. I have faith in the great promise, and shall never be forsaken."

While Miss Monkton uttered these words, her features were lit up with a strange, but heavenly inspiration, and the poor old nurse as she looked upon the young lady, thus early bereft of parents, and amidst evil times, could not help being struck with her fortitude and resignation. Tears fell down her aged cheeks; but she quickly dried them up, saying—

"Yes, yes, Miss Agnes, it is all true! '*Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!*' Blessed words, blessed words, to the desolate and oppressed!"

"They are, nurse, blessed words," answered Miss Monkton; "and happy are they, who truly and faithfully trust in them."

CHAPTER V.

Falstaff—What ! is the old king dead ?

Pistol—As nail in door : the things I speak are just.

Henry IV., Part 2nd.

“ It is a fortunate escape for us, Obadiah—very fortunate—the death of Sir Giles occupies the thoughts of our Colonel, and he has no time to think of our failure in the valley—I must say for want of vigilance. Your foolish terrors were half the cause of it.”

“ It was your roystering and wicked songs, corporal,” said Tripe, “ that roused up the

mountain spirit. Had you been more cautious and attended to my advice, we should never have been captured so suddenly. Besides, I never thought I should be employed in hunting up ghosts and demons. In face of a human enemy, I never have flinched, but unfleshy bones are unfit for a soldier's weapon. 'Oh, Lord !' "

"Come, come, Obadiah, leave out that exclamation. It is all very well to answer purposes in the conventicle, but has no effect with us, unless to make us laugh."

"Ah !" said Tripe, dolorously, "laughing, is all very well ; but we should have some reason for it—now such invocations, I take it, are too solemn for jokes. Oh !"

"Well, be it so," replied Grimstone ; "but here comes Bernard—he may have some news to communicate, and thus break the dulness of your dolorous, and would be pious, ejaculations."

Bernard, however, looked almost as dismal

and sanctified as Tripe, and growled a short answer to some jocular question, put to him by the corporal, who, always cheerful, yet had the devil in him when called up, and who was capable of undertaking any duty, if good payment was likely to ensue. He was cool-headed, and courageous, and scarcely knew what fear was, but by name. To be sure, he had been infected with it in the valley; but the bravest have been at times panic-stricken, and he followed the common herd in such matters. Bernard, sat down close beside the ample fireplace, lit a pipe from the table, and joined the rest of his companions, who were occupied in the same manner.

For a few minutes the smoke rolled upward, and filled the room with its curling vapours; and there seemed to be a kind of spell upon the rest, at the sergeant's ominous silence. After some time, and having to knock out the half consumed ashes of the pipe, Grimstone spoke to him.

"There would be, and a stubborn one," remarked Bernard. "If Richard Cromwell had the bold spirit and energy of his great Parent; but he is deficient in these material points."

"Have you heard the opinion of our Colonel?" asked Grimstone.

"How can you ask such a question?" said the sergeant. "You ought to know Colonel Monkton better. His opinions are like General Monck's, kept close. Perhaps you wish to ask him? I would recommend the trial."

"Not I indeed," replied Grimstone. "The baited bear is to be feared, unless well muzzled; and even then, he can hug closely if you go too near him. Not I, I warrant you."

"I have but just left him," said the sergeant; "and I never saw him more chafed. He was bad enough before; but this unhappy news appears to have stunned him completely. It is a clean knock-down-blow for the Musqueteers, I fear."

"Not while we have arms in our hands. The Musqueteers, have ere now, made a stubborn fight. Look at Naseby—think of Dunbar and Worcester," rejoined Grimstone.

"It is the thought of those gallant victories that makes me now despond. We had a leader, corporal—a bold leader, and a sedate and cautious soldier to command us. Where can he be found now? The last breath of the Protector was almost the dissolution of the regiment."

"I cannot look upon the matter as so lost," answered Grimstone; "the other party is crestfallen and beaten down, and their power broken into fragments—I am not cast down yet."

Here Mistress Margery entered, and there was a gleam of triumph on her face, by no means agreeable to the Musqueteers, who, indeed, looked dumb-founded and sadly crestfallen.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "I knew how it

would be soon. Your idol is no more, masters ! He is gone to his long account, and I hope he will be able to answer for his stewardship."

"Who told you this ?" demanded Bernard, in a savage tone.

"Who told me ! why the messenger who is just come from the Hall. He has been some days on the road ; and London was rife with the intelligence. But now he is stabling his horse. There was a judgment sent, my masters—aye, a heavy judgment. The voice from above spake in thunder, rain, and lightning, and Cromwell was ushered from the world, under one of the most awful storms this country has known ! Aye, aye, my masters, you must close ranks and take counsel, for, depend upon it, King Charles—yes, yes, King Charles will soon be amidst us, and then—but I say nothing—no, no, reckonings are sure to be paid some day or another. I shall soon put up the 'King's Head,' and down with the 'Roundhead' sign ; and may Heaven send it, may be to-morrow."

“Oh! dear—oh! dear!” exclaimed Tripe, in the most dolorous and whining tone.

“Oh! dear indeed! ah! well you may say so, friend Tripe; the sooner you get rid of the conventicle twang, and assume a more cheerful look the better, I warrant me. The tables will be turned, my lads, depend on’t, and before long. ‘Every dog has his day,’ so says the proverb.”

These remarks annoyed the Musqueteers greatly, more particularly Bernard, who was so excited by the pungent words, that he seized the black-jack upon the table with his sound arm, and swang it at Dame Margery’s head, saying—

“Curse your tongue, beldame, take that.”

Fortunately for her, the action was seen, and the head being bobbed aside, the blow was avoided, or the contact between skull and metal might have been fatal to the human scone. Mistress Margery looked ‘angered, and having a dish-cloth in her hand, somewhat wet and discoloured, flung it back in return, but with a

better aim, for it came point blank in the sergeant's face, and what with grease, black, and moisture, he cut but a sorry figure, and was helpless for the moment. Before he recovered, and could start up, she had vanished, but poked her head into the door-way soon after, saying quickly—

“I hope you liked the salute, Master Sergeant? keep your hands quiet, or Colonel Monkton shall hear of it.”

“Devil!” ejaculated Bernard, “I will repay you, depend on’t.”

And then, with Grimstone's help, (who could hardly help laughing, for he cut a melancholy figure,) cleaned his face, which was woefully begrimed with the dirt from the dish-cloth.

“There is some truth in what she speaks, though,” said Grimstone; “and more than may be pleasant, should the present Protector, Richard Cromwell, be unable to hold his ground. We must ponder upon our present and future hopes, sergeant.”

“Then, on that score, make your mind easy,”

replied Bernard, sulkily ; " for he is an infant in mind, and not so capable of holding power as our comrade, Obadiah Tripe."

The sergeant then went up to Grimstone, and whispered something in his ear. The other seemed struck by what he said, and nodded his head in reply, but uttered no word. Tripe looked on, but appeared so terrified by the denunciations uttered by Mistress Pucker, that his tongue clave to his mouth, and when he attempted to speak, it was but one indistinct muttering, the voice being inarticulate. Bernard rose, and went out of the room, and, within a few minutes, was followed by Grimstone, who walked from the inn-door some distance to the right, and where, on a gentle slope, beneath a beech-tree, about the fourth of a mile from Mistress Pucker's, he found the sergeant was seated. Grimstone took his place on the green knoll, but the air being cold, both soon rose, and walked side by side, when the following colloquy ensued.

"Did I understand you rightly, Bernard?" asked Grimstone; "that you have a safe clue to the entrance of the cavern?"

"You did," replied the sergeant, laconically.

"By what means gained you knowledge of so important a secret?"

"Corporal Grimstone," said Bernard, with a sullen and deep tone of voice, "ever since I received that blow, and from which my arm still suffers, I have watched like a tiger in some jungle, to reach, aye, and to crush my prey. I succeeded last night in gaining the knowledge I have been so anxiously looking out for, and have confided the secret alone to Colonel Monkton and Captain Sandys. At midnight, twenty of the Musqueteers, with the Captain to head them, are to follow my steps, and if the nest of vipers be not destroyed, root and branch, my revenge will be but half satisfied. You are to be one of the number to proceed upon this errand."

"And a pretty wild goose chase we shall have, I warrant—ending as the last did, in our discomfiture, and give to Dame Pucker fresh opportunity to laugh at us."

"You are a coward, Grimstone!" said Bernard, savagely.

"A coward!" exclaimed Grimstone, starting back a pace or two, and partly drawing his sword from the scabbard, while his face flushed, and was again pale from rage. "Had any other person used that word, he should have had the lie crammed down his throat."

"So, ho! Master Blusterer—what, threaten one whose hands are fettered—a pretty proof indeed of valour. Come, come, put down your weapon, and don't think to frighten me."

"I tell you plainly, sergeant, that had you been free, and dared thus to insult me, I would have ——"

"Pish!" replied the sergeant, "words, Master Corporal, words as empty as your scone is. However, I meant it not hardly, or

that you were as a soldier, a coward ; but that you had yielded too much to that ass, Tripe, and been infested with his fears."

"You are very complimentary, I confess," said Grimstone, "but, in return, I wish you would apply the word to Obadiah, and not to me. But of the secret—what is it?"

"You will know all at the proper moment, but as the slightest whisper might derange my plans, I can tell you nothing more, but that the entrance to the cave has been discovered. I couldn't say thus much before the rest, and here we have *no listeners*."

Think ye so, Master Bernard? If you could have looked above and behind at the same time, you might have seen a face peeping just over the edge of the cliff, beneath which yourself and Grimstone stood, and who seemed to take in every word that was uttered.

"At what time, think you," enquired Grimstone, "it is likely that the soldiers will assemble?"

"Why, I should suppose soon after eleven, for the moon peeps out just then, sufficient for our purpose in threading the valley, and leaves us time enough to rest beneath the hill, before we make the attempt."

"All nicely calculated, as it was before, but which turned out a failure. It is a bottle of field smoke, Master Bernard, and will evaporate."

"As your courage will, I suppose," growled Bernard.

"What again!" exclaimed Grimstone, "be guarded in what you say, sergeant, or you may repent it. I like not these remarks and what is more, don't choose to have them repeated. Once for all ——"

"What's that?" said Bernard, seizing Grimstone's arm.

"What's what?" replied the corporal, "why you look as if all the spirits of the mountains were up in arms, and before you."

"Didn't you hear a noise above, and see something fall?"

"*Not I*," answered the corporal.

"Then you must be deaf and blind, for I did."

"Don't talk of cowards, I beg," said Grimstone, "if you could but see your own face, as white as a sheet hanging upon the hedges I throw."

Bernard evidently was annoyed, but made no reply, looking up and around carefully; but nothing was moving, save a chattering magpie, with a hawk hovering above, as if seeking some small bird or animal for prey. Having satisfied himself that it was but some fancy of the mind, he observed—

"Talking of spirits, corporal, reminds me of the figure we have all seen, and which appeared to our Colonel only this very morning, as he rode towards the hostel. I have endured taunts enough about this seeming apparition,

but I am now rejoiced to think hearts as vigorous as mine, have been infected with similar feelings. It is the only circumstance that renders the midnight march towards the valley obnoxious."

"Aye, aye," replied Grimstone, "I laughed at Tripe, when he gave way, as I supposed, to foolish terrors, and the suppositions of such spectral figures, but I had reason to know better, for 'twas that, and that alone, which caused our sudden capture. I confess I am by no means anxious to pay another visit to the haunted valley, for Obadiah still vows it is the home of infernal spirits."

"Colonel Monkton entertained a different opinion, Grimstone," said Bernard, "but he has doubts, I know, though he does not think fit to own them."

A shrill and sudden scream was then heard at some distance, and before the corporal and sergeant could recover from the surprise caused by it, a repetition of a similar kind was heard,

close above them, and which blanched their cheeks, and made them both shake, as if stricken with an ague fit. The one looked at the other astounded, and the feeling of the super-natural once more overcame both. After a while, Bernard spoke, but in a whisper, saying—

“I am sure our words have been overheard, and that some one has been above us. There was a movement—it was slight enough, but my ear is quick, and I could detect it. But for the offer of a thousand crowns ——”

“*A thousand crowns!*” said Grimstone, “is there such a sum for a poor Musqueteer? What are the odds to gain it?”

“Oh! nothing for you or I,” answered the sergeant, who felt he had, in some degree, under excitement, opened his mouth too wide, “but I have little doubt, a handsome sum would be given, could we reach the cave and capture the inmates.”

“Yes,” replied Grimstone, “if we *could*

reach it, but yet you seem so sure about it. As to capturing the party within, that is another matter. I tell you what, sergeant, we are employed upon duties with which we have little to do, and but for the share I had in a recent transaction not worthy notice—”

“Hush !” said Bernard, in a whisper, “I heard a rustling again, just above us, as if some one moved amidst dry leaves—hush !”

Both now stood motionless for a few minutes, and listened attentively ; but not a movement could be detected ; and as Grimstone seemed incredulous as to Bernard’s fancy, the sergeant was not so certain as to the nicety of his ear, and attributed it to the wind, as it swept occasionally, in slight puffs, over the mountain ridges.

“Let us move onward towards the hostel,” said Bernard, “and I can then talk as we walk gently on. I am not quite satisfied as to the neighbourhood we are in, and we cannot be too cautious.”

"*It is needful,*" said a peculiar voice near them.

Bernard started as if he had received a smart blow, and drew a pistol from his breast, which he always kept there; though such a weapon was not permitted by the regulation of the army, except under rules, and for particular duties. Grimstone almost sprang up a yard, so astounded was he, and then drew his sword, as if he expected a sudden assault.

"I tell you what, sergeant," said he, "I think you are now right enough. The voice was human and above us. Let us ascend the hill and take a survey?"

"With all my heart," replied Bernard, "mortal men have no terrors for a Musqueteer."

"If they *be* mortal men," said Grimstone, "but let us see—you take the right ascent, and I will take the left—if we catch the listener, his skull and my weapon may become better acquainted."

"A pistol bullet quiets eaves dropping," said the sergeant, "come, let us about it."

They made quickly towards the elevated mountainous ridge, whence they supposed the rustling sound had come, and from which spot they imagined the voice had issued, and after some little time, gained the summit. Both met together within a few yards, but these few yards were difficult to overcome, so that they could reach each other, for a dark and steep ravine was beneath their view, and a stream of pure water gushed from the rocks, and fell down in a small cascade, where it was lost amidst the depth of the space below. Bernard looked fixedly at Grimstone, and Grimstone looked at Bernard, and their tongues, from sheer amazement, were tied for awhile.

No trace of mortal foot could be discerned, nor was a human soul to be found, and this, added to the other circumstances so often

mentioned, made a powerful impression on both.

It is a well known fact, that the bravest and best soldiers have been, upon some trivial matter, panic-stricken, and thus have been successfully routed by an opposing force, which, had they met and fairly faced, might have been encountered with effect.

Such was the terror of Bernard and Grimstone, that they looked upon one another in wild amazement, and without uttering one word, they descended the hill with much more speed than they had gained it. Bernard muttering and Grimstone saying—

“Obadiah is right—yes, right enough—there are demons here, and nothing less—come, sergeant, let us back to the Inn and recruit ourselves, for to stand up and fight with such is a moral impossibility—nay, it would be monstrous.”

Bernard, it may be supposed, acquiesced in

these remarks, for he moved mechanically towards Dame Margery's, side by side, with Grimstone, and the remainder of the way was pursued, without a word passing between them.

CHAPTER VI.

Viola.—If spirits can assume both form and suit,
You come to fright us.

TWELFTH NIGHT.

Antigonus.—I have heard (but not believed) the spirits of
the dead,
May walk again.

WINTER'S TALE.

As the evening advanced, so did the terror of
Obadiah Tripe; indeed, he had an inkling to
abscond, but then the dread of being taken,
and the consequent punishment which would

be inflicted, prevented him carrying such an intention into effect. On the one hand, the nocturnal expedition to the valley, he felt sure would be almost death to him, but he might get behind a comrade in the dark, and hide his face from the goblin visions, he felt sure would assail them. On the other hand, he saw a kneeling Musqueteer with a handkerchief over his eyes, and a file of his comrades with levelled weapons pointed at his head !

As the modern phrase runs—he was in a regular fix !

“ Lord preserve me, sinner that I am—oh ! why did I ever leave my poor mother to take up this cause as it is called—what had I to do with the Parliament, or the Parliament with me ! I might have been at the plough tail now, had I listened to her advice ; but ’twas Bernard, who enticed me with fine promises and good pay, and honour and so forth—all

smoke and words—Oh ! dear, oh ! dear, what a fool I have been—If I desert, I shall be caught and shot, and if I see any more such sights as I did, when I was in the valley, run I must, unless I fall down from fright. I would rather take the hazard of ten Worcesters, than go again into that demon spot !”

“Obadiah Tripe !” it was the voice of Captain Sandys.

“Oh ! dear, oh ! dear ! there’s the muster-call. Here, here, Captain !” he cried as he ran out, and fell into line, forming in the inn-yard.

“Corporal Grimstone !” said Captain Sandys, “you will be ready to proceed with me shortly before midnight, and have twenty of the Musqueteers in complete marching order about a quarter before twelve to-night. There is an expedition upon which I am about to lead you, which will require great caution and steadiness, and I hope, indeed I am sure, from all I gather, it will be successfully carried out. Let

this be looked to. I shall remain at the hostel until the time for moving arrives, and expect all things prepared. You hear ?”

“I do, honoured sir,” replied Grimstone ;
“the men shall be ready to the minute.”

“You will find me within, should anything occur between this and the appointed hour.”

With this, Captain Sandys dismissed the Musqueteers, and entered the inn.

Captain Sandys, although he had entered the parliamentary army, it being the best field for promotion, was not particularly smitten with the duties he had to perform ; and more especially such as he was called upon to undertake at night. The death of the dreaded Protector, was, in some measure, a relief to him ; for he felt assured, the present possessor of the office would stand a poor chance of resisting the power which had been for some time making head, and would have increased impetus by the death of Cromwell.

Sandys was a good and bold soldier — had

seen much service, and though he was hampered by his present position, resolved to take advantage of the chapter of accidents (as many others would do) under the peculiar nature of the times, and when a fair opportunity presented itself. His character was too open and manly for the service he held, and he detested the hypocritical mask of religion, assumed for the purpose of advancement, which rendered it to many detestable.

He had ventured to hint to Sir Gerard Monkton, his objection to undertake duties repulsive to his feelings—the answer he received, however, was short, but imperative, and present resistance was out of the question. He could not fathom the motive the Colonel had, for this determined hunting up of the migratory inmates of the cave. Something more than the mere capture of men so insignificant as gipsies, must be at the bottom of this expedition. However, he could only obey the orders of his superior officer, and whose stern and unrelenting cha-

acter, opened to him more and more daily. Since the death of Sir Giles, the Colonel had been surly and morose, and his character appeared in a great measure changed ; as if he had been foiled in some object near his heart, and vented his spleen upon all who came within reach, to soften, as he supposed, his own failure, whatever it may have been. Captain Sandys was not in error as to the fact of some annoyance ; but could not comprehend the cause. That was known only to Sir Gerard, Snuffle, and Master Chalfont, whilst a prize he had almost considered within grasp, upon the death of his uncle, was further removed than ever, by the production of a will of the late Lady Monkton, made, with the approval of her husband, just before her death ; and wherein it was mentioned, that the hand and fortune of Agnes Monkton could *only be* obtained with the consent of her trustees ; and to his utter astonishment and chagrin, these trustees were Ephraim Snuffle and John Chalfont. There

was no disputing the will—it bore the signature of the late lady—was countersigned by Sir Giles Monkton, and regularly attested. Had Sir Gerard doubted the hand-writing his uncle's signature was clear enough, and though he raged and stormed like a chafed boar, he had no alternative but to submit to circumstances.

Still he was not satisfied, and there was an inward feeling that some chicanery had been practised ; but if so, it had been adroitly managed, and was beyond the reach of detection. Thus, half the possessions which Sir Giles had, previously to his decease, was in a manner wrested from him, and placed in hands by no means favourable to his ambitious hopes. Snuffle was an enigma to him—religion in its true meaning he had none ; but he also knew that he was crafty and designing, and that he was not likely to yield up his prerogative very easily ; of Chalfont little was known ; but Colonel Monkton supposed he was an ally of .

Ephraim's, and that he would be guided by his directions.

In this, however, he was in error, for John Chalfont was as wily as Snuffle, but infinitely more astute, and any chance offering, whereby wealth could be obtained for the benefit of his church; not very likely to be allowed to pass from his grasp, without a desperate struggle. Poor Agnes ! she little knew into whose hands she had fallen ; but the time was coming when the real nature of her position would be known, and known, alas ! to her unhappiness.

The night, as it crept on, was fine for the season, and the stars twinkled amidst the canopy of heaven, in diamond-like radiance. Clouds now and then scudded over the mountains, swept onward by a smart wind, and the moon arose in its crescent beauty, lighting up hill, and valley, and mountain current, as it fell in sparkling gushes from the openings. The lake in the distance, was gleaming under the moonlight and towards a later hour,

fell into shadow, as it beneath the clouds. There was a nipping air, and a slight frost, though when the Musqueteers were under arms, and ready for their march towards the valley, the cold was not so great, as it was some time after. Captain Sandys came from the hostel, and leading on the men, with Bernard beside him as a guide, the route was quietly and steadily pursued towards the cave.

We will leave them on the road for a short time, and peep within the chasm, where, in the place we have before described, sat Will-o'-the-Waste, Wilfred, and others belonging to the gipsy party. Wilfred, who appeared renovated in health, was engaged in earnest conversation with the gipsy, when Gilbert rushed in almost breathless, exclaiming—

“Master! master!” and then stood apparently unable to say more, from the speed he had used in reaching them.

“What now—what affrights you, Gilbert?”

You are not apt to be easily shaken, unless by some serious matter."

"The matter *is* serious, worthy master," said Gilbert, pausing again to take breath, when he proceeded thus—

"The secret entrance of the cave has been discovered; the Musqueteers will be upon us about midnight."

"How know you this?" inquired Will-o'-the-Waste, eagerly.

"I will tell you," replied Gilbert: "you desired me, as usual, to keep a good look out after Mistress Alice; I was on the alert, and watched her from hill to valley, until I saw she was safe within the cave. As I was about to return, I heard voices beneath the crag where I was placed, and behind a tree, so that I was unnoticed by those beneath me. Then I learned that a file of the Musqueteers was to march at the hour I said but now, and from the discourse, I have little doubt the opening has been detected."

"Did you see the persons?" asked Will-o'-the-Waste?"

"I did."

"And the parties?"

"Were two of the Musqueteers. They did not seem to relish the job, and spoke of the spectral figure which had terrified them, when they were so easily captured by us before. They had doubts about it, but Colonel Monkton had seen it, as he rode from the Hall; and this seemed to make a great impression upon them."

"Who is to lead them?" asked Wilfred eagerly.

"A Captain Sandys, I think they said," answered Gilbert.

"I know him well," said the young man. "He is a bold and gallant gentleman; and were the soldiers always led by such officers, I should fear the game would be up for the Royal cause."

"Step aside with me," exclaimed Will-o'

the-Waste to Wilfred. "I have a path from this mischief, which, if I mistake not, will effectually help us. Brave men infected with the ideal and spectral world are often blinded, and thus readily discomfited. I will explain the mode of defence I wish carried out. You are a soldier, Wilfred, and will readily comprehend my meaning. Gilbert, see that Alice does not leave the cave without my knowledge. I have special cause that she should be carefully watched."

"I will obey you, master, with my life," replied the faithful Gilbert.

Will-o'-the-Waste walked to and fro in the valley, arm in arm with Wilfred, and explained to him what he wished to be done on his part, and what he would do with his men. The plan appeared to Wilfred an admirable one, and he had no doubt the Musqueteers would yet be foiled in their attempt to reach the cave as they supposed, so easily. He grasped the hand of his friend firmly and affectionately, and again

passed into the cavern to carry out the directions he had received, but as he was entering, the former said hastily—

“Send Gilbert to me, and you watch Alice until he returns. I have a few questions to ask him.”

Gilbert soon came, and then Will said—

“How did you contrive to hide yourself, Gilbert, or reach us without being detected?”

“I had a difficulty, but my powers of imitating voices at a distance served me well. They heard a loud scream, and it was answered from above. This startled them, and they began to ascend the hill—as they came up, I slid down, and crept into a hollow of the rock, where I hid myself, until they went from the spot. All the clefts and ravines were known to me, and I passed swiftly along, catching at any cover to secrete myself, until I reached the cavern.”

“It was fortunate you were so near, or we

might have been surprised at disadvantage. Go in, brave lad, and learn from Wilfred what my wishes are. Let them be followed to the letter, and we shall extricate ourselves yet. Depend upon it, after this our haunt, will not again be molested. Go in at once."

Gilbert did as he was desired, while Will-o'-the-Waste turned in another direction.

The turret-clock of Monkton Hall struck twelve, as the Musqueteers entered the narrow way leading to the cave, and the last sound of the clapper appeared to Tripe as a death-warrant. He shook like an aspen leaf, and had a mouse stirred beneath him, he would undoubtedly have let his musket fall, and taken to his heels. Bernard, though he led the way, was by no means delighted with his position; nor was Grimstone fascinated by the nocturnal expedition on which he was bound. Captain Sandys moved silently, but surely; and though a bold soldier, as we have said, was very anxious

until they had threaded the pass, and fairly stood upon the greensward.

Here, they had an open field, and the whole force could be brought to bear upon a given point, effectually. All was still—silent as the grave. The wind had fallen, and the light was only sufficient for them to follow the leading of the sergeant, who moved slowly towards the place he had the night before, watched Will-o'-the-Waste enter, as he dogged his steps from the hostel. He had, however, not found out the entrance, for the gipsy never at once passed into the real opening, fearing some prying eye might be watching, but secreted himself under some bushes near it, and then glanced, around, so that he might be sure he had not been tracked. Bernard waited not a moment for this, but made his way back to Colonel Monkton, who eagerly listened to his statement, and made arrangements for the surprise.

The Musqueteers had advanced two thirds over the valley towards the opening described to Captain Sandys by Bernard, when a hideous scream was heard, followed by another—another—and another, appearing as if a voice of supernatural character had possessed itself of every crag around the cave, and making the flesh creep, upon the bones of each of the Musqueteers. Tripe uttered a deep, but subdued, “ Oh ! ” Bernard started—Grimstone was staggered—and Captain Sandys, it must be confessed, was surprised at the unearthly sound ! Before they had well recovered the alarm, a light gradually appeared on the hill just before them ; it increased in intensity, —it was first blue and somewhat indistinct, but it gradually assumed a brilliancy and power, throwing a flood of radiance over the hills around them, and lighting up the valley and the Musqueteers, so that they became a perfect target, for any one, who might be in ambush to assail them. As the light became

more vivid, a sight was seen, which almost paralysed Bernard and Grimstone. On the topmost height of the nearest mountain, two figures were beheld—the one, wore a military habit of the Cavaliers, and a blood streak marked the face; beside him, pale and still, was the spectral object they had before observed, and little else was needed to make the fright effectual. The corporal and sergeant were horror-stricken—there stood, as one arisen from the grave, the murdered victim of their avarice, pointing, in solemn stillness, to the wound inflicted by them, and before they recovered their consternation, scattered musketry rattled from the hills, and several shots struck the soldiery—one, passed close to Captain Sandys' hat, and Obadiah Tripe, who fled the moment the figures were seen, received a swan shot in an honorable part, just sufficient to satisfy him, and make his flight more rapid. Down went the musket, and away went legs and arms—he heeded not the way, but strug-

gling onward and onward, he fell amidst a heap of stones, and from thence rolled down a declivity, where he was received, into a ditch of pure water, sinking up to his arm-pits.

Before Captain Sandys recovered his first surprise, and could order the men to return the fire, he found himself almost deserted. The Musqueteers were completely frightened, not by the firing, but by the sudden and terrible figures, and the unearthly screeching that had so suddenly preceded it. Two of them alone remained, the others, having rushed, pell mell, into the pass, and, like Tripe, struggled, as they best could, to reach the main road, and their quarters at the hostel.

The figure of the Cavalier, on the eminence, was sufficient to terrify Grimstone and Bernard, but as Sandys looked earnestly at both, his astonishment was extreme. He knew the features, though the face was pale and almost livid, from the intense light, and, dis-

figured as it was, by the dark blood streak which partly covered the right cheek. He was almost bewildered, and as he still looked upward with amazement, both were gradually hidden from view, as the fire gleam lessened, and by degrees faded entirely away, leaving the hill under complete shadow.

The mystery was now, in a great degree, explained, as to the real cause of this crusade against the gipsies, made by Colonel Monkton. The military costume and the features, so indelibly impressed upon him by early associations, were too distinct not to be known at once, but how had they come there ! What cause brought Wilfred into the gipsy haunt ? Captain Sandys knew him well—they had served in the same regiment—they had often and often, sat side by side together, and the surprise was perfect. In fact, what he had heard, now became more easily comprehended. It had required some strong

reason for extreme measures on his own part, and which, the recent death of the once powerful Cromwell made stronger, and his mind, as it were, was made up, as to his future proceedings. Any further attempt, on his part, to carry out the intentions of Colonel Monkton, would have been supremely ridiculous. He slowly went back, still, at times, looking about the hill, and then, giving the word, moved on steadily with the remaining soldiers, to retrace their steps towards the inn.

Will-o'-the-Waste and Gilbert were safely ensconced amidst the brushwood cover, close to the pass, and it was only upon the strong arm of the gipsy being placed upon that of Gilbert's, (who began to chuckle at the terror of the Musqueteers), that he was restrained from giving out an exuberant shout of laughter, as Tripe, scampered off from the supposed demon of the mountainous valley, so speedily followed by the rest, but, to his mind, slowly enough by Captain Sandys. Will, waited with the most

consummate prudence and patience for some time, under shelter, and when he was assured all was right, or rather, that it was safe for him to emerge, did so, slowly and cautiously. His movements were noticed and followed by Gilbert. As his tall and commanding figure gained the upright posture, he looked cautiously about him on all sides, and having satisfied himself that all the soldiers were away, said—

“Gilbert—follow me into the cave—depend upon it, we are now released from our enemies—they will come here no more.”

He then crept out of the copse, and as he was ordered, Gilbert followed his footsteps.

CHAPTER VII.

How I love to gaze on the little spot,
O'er which I've wander'd in boyhood's hours ;
Yet I'm sad to think 'tis not my lot,
To gather and weave its earliest flowers.

L.

THE winter had passed, the gloomy winter, when the trees and shrubs are almost bereft of their beauty, and the outward garb of nature has a desolate appearance. Spring was again present—the beautiful spring, redolent with flowers ; and the hedge-rows and fields covered

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a clump of beech trees, beneath which she seated herself, feeling a little tired by her walk, and wishing a few minutes' rest, before she returned to the simple but comfortable morning repast. Memory was busy with her as she remained beneath the shadow of the trees, and recollections of earlier days passed in vivid pictures through the mind. She had, indeed, been happy then—yes, very, very happy. No anxiety or thought of the future—all was redolent with summer flowers, and the dark, wintry shadows, were lost amidst the sunshine, and had no home in her young heart. Childhood is, indeed, a happy time—we think of it in distant regions, when the absence from all we love is more acutely felt. We can see the spot “in the mind's eye,” even though leagues separate us from the once loved ones, and many a bitter throb wrings the heart, when we think they may never meet us again! She felt a shade of melancholy, and a song which Wilfred used to sing when a boy, came to her recollec-

tion, and she almost involuntarily gave utterance to the words. Her voice was not powerful, but it was sweet and plaintive, and suited well the character of the words:—

SONG.

“ Days of childhood—happy hours,
Scatter'd o'er with summer flowers ;
Gilded bright with sunbeam's ray,
Roses strewn along the way.
Days of childhood, you have fled—
All your charms are withered !

Oh ! happy, happy, happy time,
When evening brought the vesper chime.”

She paused awhile, and was about to commence again, when to her astonishment, a voice, full-toned and manly, took up the thread of the song and continued it—

“ Days of childhood—soft and fair,
Fleeting as the passing air ;

Brighter hours are yet in store,
Childhood's days can come no more :
Once they pass, the visions fly,
Resting in eternity !
Oh ! happy, happy, happy time !
Hope is heard in vesper chime !"

She listened to the well-known voice—it had a resting-place in her heart—it was known too well ever to be forgotten. She started from her seat, and before she could well recover herself, fell almost lifeless into the arms of—— Wilfred !

"Dearest, dearest Agnes !" said he, as he clasped her fervently to his bosom, "once more I hold you, never, I trust, to be separated. Speak, love, say I am welcome—tell me that you still hold me dear ! Not a word, Agnes—no reply after so long an absence ?"

He held up her head from his bosom, and saw the pale features with the tears stealing down her cheeks—tears of joy, but so over-

whelming, that speech was for a time denied. She looked earnestly at Wilfred, made an effort to answer his affectionate words, but it was beyond her present power. He saw the condition into which she had fallen, and, tenderly supporting her, led her by gentle steps towards the humble but pretty cottage of the kind surgeon. He had adopted another dress—a simple but unpretending costume of a gentleman of the day, though his features were changed by anxiety, and some stain of the skin had been adopted for security. The voice was enough for Agnes—she knew it too well; and had wounds or scars disfigured the face, it would have been known under any circumstances. With his arm round her waist, and with the utmost care, they gradually reached the house, and were met on its threshold by Garside and his sister, who received them with affectionate greetings. The morning repast was unpretending, but ample; by the request of Garside, Agnes took some nourish-

ment, and, by degrees, conquered the powerful emotion she had shewn, upon the sudden appearance of Wilfred. He felt he had been premature, in coming so suddenly upon her after so long an absence, and she saw regret marked in his expressive features. This aroused her, and she once more resumed her placid demeanour.

The meal being over and removed, Garside turned to Wilfred and said—

“You are rash, young sir, in thus coming so near the Hall—you have bitter enemies there, and may be tracked.”

“I have no fear,” answered Wilfred; “my change of dress and the stain upon my skin will make them suppose I am a foreigner, and I can chatter in Italian, French, or German, so as to deceive the best of them.”

This was said with a smiling face, and a frank and good-humoured tone of voice, and Garside was not displeased to find that he bore the anxieties and difficulties he had encoun-

tered, and would have to encounter, with so cheerful an aspect. Wilfred, he knew, had served abroad, and was well versed in several continental languages, and looking at him earnestly, he could not help thinking, that but for his long knowledge of him, it might have been difficult to say it was *the* Wilfred of some few months back.

"You are altered, certainly," said the surgeon; "and might pass as a stranger, unless they knew you as I do; for the voice is still the same—I should not be mistaken there."

"Sir Gerard Monkton," said a person almost close to Garside's ear, and who, when he turned, heard the words pronounced in a different tone from another part of the room. The worthy surgeon appeared bewildered by the peculiar character of the voice. He started up—opened the door, but no one was in the passage. He then looked into a cupboard behind him, but no soul

was there, and his astonishment became intense.

"It is strange," he said, "I could have fancied Master Snuffle was playing the part of eaves-dropper; for it was his nasal twang, I am sure. Has any one been here lately?" he asked, of his sister.

"No one," she replied, "unless the usual persons who come for any commands we have, or wish to consult you, brother."

Agnes was equally surprised, neither was Miss Garside unmoved by the sudden exclamation of a name none of them held in very great estimation. Whence could the sound proceed? No one seemed to know, and Garside fancied he must have been mistaken, or that some jay might have perched in one of the blossoming fruit-trees, and chattered something like the name uttered.

"Sir Gerard Monkton!" once more were the words heard, and apparently in another

tone, from under the table. All started, save Wilfred, and each looked under the cloth, which had not been removed. Nothing could be seen there, except the old lap-dog, and he was asleep, and snoring. Again were they all amazed; when Garside, turning to Wilfred, observed him smile, and then burst into a fit of laughter.

"What is the matter, Wilfred?—what does all this mean?" asked Garside.

"Why," replied the young man, "you said but now, that I might deceive a stranger, from my general appearance, being so altered; but that you could not be mistaken in my voice."

"Neither could I," said Garside.

"Indeed, then you are mistaken; for it was no one but myself who called out 'Sir Gerard Monkton;' and this he did again before them, though the deception remained complete."

"I have heard of certain powers of imitating voices thus amongst some of the gipsy tribes; but though I know the human vocal chords

are possessed of astonishing powers, I never supposed they could be made so wonderfully deceptive."

"It is so, however," said Wilfred; "I learnt the secret from Gilbert, who is an adept in the art; and possessing similar organs, he soon found a ready and docile pupil. Do you think, now, I could deceive you?" asked the young man.

"Why, you have deceived us all, Wilfred," replied Garside. "It is certainly a wonderful gift."

"It is," replied Wilfred, "and but few possess the power, and it may be fortunate that I am one of the lucky ones. It may help me when needed."

"I never was more deceived in my life," said Garside; "the voice was perfect as to its intonation, and I almost expected to find some one close to my elbow. However, you are not so likely to be annoyed now, Wilfred. Sir Gerard Monkton has left the Hall for London,

and the Musqueteers have been withdrawn, and are replaced by two companies of another regiment, to whom you are unknown. Master Snuffle still remains, and is a perfect nuisance. I cannot prevent his coming here at times ; for he is one of the trustees under Lady Monkton's will, to Miss Agnes, and there is business to be transacted, and which I take care is done when I am present, or if, unavoidably absent, my sister never leaves the room. He is a man I would avoid entirely, if I could ; but there is, here, no alternative."

"How was it, dear Agnes, that you became thus enthralled ? There must have been some base deception practised, or I am sure, from all I know of our late friend, she never placed you voluntarily under Master Snuffle's care."

"I have little doubt this has been the case," replied Garside ; "and at the proper time all will be detected. Master Ephraim is not what he seems, and the utmost care is necessary to deal with so crafty a man. Deceit, often over-

reaches itself, and it will do so, or I am grievously in error. Lady Monkton never signed such a document, though under present circumstances we can only move cautiously. I have my eye on him, and there is another equally vigilant, who will be on the alert."

"You ask me, Wilfred," said Agnes, "what I cannot explain. My dearest mother had the utmost aversion to Master Snuffle—I never liked him, and she was too fond, and too kind ever to place me under such control. The whole matter is a forgery—I know it—I am sure of it."

"I suspect you are right, Miss Agnes," remarked Garside; "but to *prove* this forgery will be the difficulty. Of one thing I am certain, that you have a sincere friend in me, and one other who has more power to serve you, than I have. However, it is of little moment discussing this question now, and indeed I have scarcely time to enter upon it, at present, as I have some distance to ride, and must

be from home until evening sets in. You will remain with the ladies, Wilfred, and be their Cavalier until I return."

"I intend to remain until to-morrow," replied Wilfred; "and if you can house me for the night, I shall be obliged to you. If not convenient, I will go to the hostel, for there I have no fear of being detected. Besides, I am well armed, and it would be no easy task to take me at disadvantage. My old enemies, you say, have left their quarters, and so far I need not fear."

"The Musqueteers have left this place," said Garside; "but I hear some of them have deserted, and may be hovering about still. Master Snuffle is not particular with whom he associates; and I have some suspicion one or more of them are in the neighbourhood. If so, I would have you on your guard."

"Dear Wilfred!" exclaimed Agnes, "remain here to-night. I am sure our kind friend, would not wish you should leave us yet. Those

terrible men may be about, and you might fall into their hands."

"Be not afraid, dearest," answered Wilfred, kindly taking her hand, and kissing her forehead, "I will not hazard myself by any foolish exposure at night, if I can help it."

"You can remain here," observed Garside; "my sister has a spare room at your service; and the longer you stop with us, the greater our satisfaction will be."

"Oh, yes, do remain!" said Miss Garside, "it will put *me* to no inconvenience; for though our cottage is small, we have a spare room for an old friend, and no one can be more welcome than you are, Mr. Wilfred."

"I thank you, dear madam, for your frankness, and I shall with pleasure accept your kind offer," said he, taking her hand, and pressing it gratefully. "I have but short space allowed for absence, and would profit by it, *here*."

The last word was spoken emphatically, and

a fond glance was cast upon Agnes, who beheld the affectionate look, whilst a faint blush suffused her cheek.

"Farewell, then, for the present," said Garside. "I need offer no apology for an absence, which imperative duty demands, or I would remain and act the part of a more hospitable friend. You will be in good hands, I know," resumed the surgeon, smiling; "and, I dare say, your time will not hang *very heavy*."

He held out his hand, and Wilfred took it, shaking it warmly, and saying, with a smiling face—

"I must submit to my hard lot with the ladies, and shall be watch and ward over them until you return."

Garside then left them, and his horse being ready, he mounted it, and cantered away from his cottage upon his daily duties. Miss Garside having her domestic affairs to arrange, left the room, and Agnes remained alone with

Wilfred, who said, as he seated himself beside her—

“How was it, dear one, that you left Monkton Hall so abruptly? you wrote to me that you were unhappy—that you needed advice; but I suppose matters had assumed a more unpleasant character, rendering it necessary you should seek the shelter of our excellent friend’s roof, forthwith. Is it so?”

“It is,” replied Agnes; “the importunities of Sir Gerard Monkton were incessant, and my life unbearable! But for the interposition of Master Snuffle, I could not have lived there so long.”

“Master Snuffle interpose!” exclaimed Wilfred; “why, you surprise me. How was this?”

“I cannot explain how it happened, but can only say, it did happen, and that he saved me often, from repetitions of a similar kind. Still there was a distressing feeling constantly

on the mind, and I stole from the Hall one morning before any one was stirring, and came at once to this friendly roof. Garside had offered me an asylum, should a necessity arise for my quitting the home I had so long considered my own."

"There is mystery, upon mystery. I am sure Snuffle had some object to gain in acting as he has done."

"It may be so," replied Agnes; "but still it saved me from excessive importunity, and was a protection, in some measure, from insult."

"Insult! Agnes, said you insult?" exclaimed the young man, with a flushed and troubled countenance, and involuntarily placing his hand upon his sword-hilt, and starting from his chair. "Has Sir Gerard Monkton presumed to offer it to one so unprotected? He shall answer it with his heart's blood."

"Say not so, oh! say not so, dear Wilfred—you will be in danger—you must not inter-

you are very, very kind, dear Wilfred, and I will be ready in a minute."

He had seated himself near the window, and before she left the room, she kissed him gently on the forehead—a purer or more affectionate love-token was never yielded to man. Ere he could return it, she bounded out of the room. He looked at the door-way as she passed through, and exclaimed—

"Fond and affectionate thou art, dearest Agnes; and the heart must be cold indeed which is insensible to the honour of thy love!"

The cottage of the worthy Garside was almost embosomed in a vale; though, towards the south, it was open to the road, and had a nice gravel walk leading towards a pretty little gate, which was covered with the flowering shrubs of the season, festooned over an arch above it. The garden itself, as we have said, was studded with early spring flowers, all neatly placed for effect, and the whole most

tastefully laid out. The house itself was trellised over its frontage, and had a white and cleanly appearance. Overhanging the back, were ridges of hilly country, and so widely different from the peaceful and retired nook, in which the cottage and garden were placed, that, on turning immediately round, a stranger would almost have imagined some magic hand had metamorphosed the scene he had just beheld, into some more rugged and desolate region. There, it was wildly picturesque—here, it was a scene of domestic happiness, and the homestead had a snug and comfortable appearance, and the wearied eye could well rest upon its inviting aspect.

Monkton Hall, placed as it was upon an eminence, could be plainly seen, and it had a proud effect amidst the scenery; overlooking as it did, the little romantic valley in which this homestead, and several smaller ones, were placed. The wanderer, who leaves his fatherland in search of other scenery, and more

luxuriant climates, often thinks of such a cottage, and such a pretty nook as the one we have but now described, and longs for that resting-place, which he then foolishly imagined, was scarcely sufficient for his ambitious hopes.

We have presumed upon the absence of Agnes, to put on her walking attire, and of Wilfred sitting in the chair, and thinking of many, many things, which crossed his mind in fantastic images, to make these few remarks ; but as Miss Monkton came again into the room, her lovely and interesting appearance, set off as it was by a simple and elegant, but unpretending dress, and, with a blush suffusing her beautiful cheek, as she saw Wilfred rise to receive her, we must leave the rest of what we have to say, to a more fitting moment, should such occur.

“ You have not kept me waiting long, love,” said Wilfred, placing his arm round her waist, and kissing her cheek ; “ and that is something to say, of one of the fairest part of the creation,

for they are not generally very rapid in their movements, when personal decoration is concerned."

"It is fortunate for you, sir," replied Agnes, smiling, "that Miss Garside was not here to notice so complimentary a speech."

"Probably, I should not have made the remark, had any one save Agnes Monkton been present," he replied, with an arch expression of feature.

"You presume much, Wilfred, upon Agnes Monkton's good nature in not being affronted at the insinuation. But I am now prepared for a walk, and wait your pleasure."

"I am ready," replied Wilfred; "and should the morning be an hour longer than usual, dear Agnes, I fear I should even then wish the time protracted. Now," he continued, "*a votre service*," when he took her arm within his, and they passed along the passage, and encountering Miss Garside, who smiled upon

them kindly, and wished them a pleasant stroll.

“Mind,” she said, “we dine at one o’clock, and are very, very punctual.”

Wilfred bowed to her, and, with Agnes, was soon in the garden; and, after a time, they sauntered into the woodlands around and about them; and as the conversation of lovers when together is not always interesting to others, we shall not enter upon it here.

CHAPTER VIII.

Iago—Awake! what, ho! Brabantio! thieves!
Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags!
Thieves! thieves!

Othello.

THE evening, as it advanced towards its close, became lowering, and the wind swept over the mountain ridges in heavy gusts, and though the massive-looking clouds towards the west betokened rain, yet were they driven onward and onward with rapid motion, before its powerful influence.

Garside had just returned fatigued, by a hard day's ride, having been some distance to visit a sick patient, who looked upon him as one more than mortal.

The party was seated round his comfortable fire-side, and each one seemed happy—indeed, it would have been difficult to say, upon which countenance satisfaction, beamed with the most sunny smile. After the supper tray had been removed, the ladies soon retired for the night, and Wilfred was about to seek his repose, when Garside said—

“Remain awhile, Wilfred—I have something to say to you, and may not have a more fitting opportunity.”

The young man obeyed him, and once more resumed his position before the fire. The surgeon roused up the wood ashes, placed a couple of logs upon the fire, and then, settling himself comfortably in his chair, commenced as follows—

"Your best friend, and whose heart is, as it were, bound up in your cause—"

"What cause?" enquired the young man, with anxiety depicted on his face.

"I beseech you," said Garside, "do not interrupt me—I have much to say, and have little time to speak all that may be necessary for you to know."

"I am silent," said Wilfred, "and will listen patiently."

"I was about to tell you," said Garside, "matters of the utmost importance to your future happiness—your position in life, and, as to the conduct it behoves us all to pursue, in a very perilous struggle, but which would have been more so, had the Protector lived. Will-o'-the-Waste—"

"What of him—what of that kind and good man?" exclaimed Wilfred, eagerly.

His friend merely gave him an expressive look, when he found he had from anxiety

broken his promise. Garside observed his confusion, and went on—

“I was about to say, that Will-o’-the-Waste has left the cave, and that the persons who assumed the character of gipsies are no longer its inmates. Alice is with her father, and never more will they enter within it.”

Observing Wilfred impatient, and like a young and mettlesome steed ready to start, and champ the bit with eagerness, he merely waved his hand as if to impose silence.

“You may have foreshadowed, from the superior manner of our friend—his intellectual bearing and propriety of conduct, that he was not always situated as you found him, when he protected you after your injury.”

Wilfred merely bowed.

“That he had more than a common interest in you, and his anxiety for your safety, was that of a parent. I must now travel back some years, and speak of matters which

took place when you were a child. As the Parliamentary successes under that great man, Oliver Cromwell, were hourly advancing, so did the royal cause fade, until by the cruel sacrifice of the king's life, all hope of its rising again was lost. Many persons, whose positions in society had been in high places, were reduced to humble ones, and were glad to hide in any spot most secure from the sanctified blood-hounds of the revolution; for revolution it was. The more simple-minded and honourable, the more did persecution follow them. I have lived long enough to know, that talkers about religion mock it most, and that the true Christian, by his noble bearing and kindness to his fellow-creatures, pays more adoration to the Benevolent hand that has created him, than the sanctimonious scoundrel who hides, under a mock humility, the basest and most heartless passions! The one, honours the earth which bears him—the other, degrades

the form of man. However, I forget myself, and am digressing.

“Sir Giles Monkton who had been a staunch supporter of the royal cause—was then kind, and gentle, and brave ; but as a certain person was thrust into the family, he gradually became taciturn, and even morose. He had received much notice from the Lord Protector, and pride, that curse of society, soon made him look with a more favourable eye upon the Parliamentary cause—the more so, as it faded under the astute and powerful mind which at last overwhelmed it. It was about this period that you were sent from Monkton Hall, and that you went to join your regiment, which you shortly afterwards left, to follow the royal fortunes. You knew Lady Monkton—you loved her, and her fondness for you was almost parental. Her death, which followed soon after, was a loss that can never be replaced ; for it sometimes happens, that one single blank in a family circle, breaks up the

happiness of it, and when that one possesses virtues which are alien to the others, it is rarely filled up. No one felt this sad bereavement more than the little Agnes; and there was another, who sympathised with the interesting child, and who also felt the loss of a kind friend—that other one was Andrew Melvil. During the life of Lady Monkton, there was a gleam of sunshine over the Hall, but her death dispelled it; and Melvil, finding his interest and admonitions with Sir Giles, sink under Master Snuffle's increasing power, resolved to leave it, which intention he carried into effect.

"It was a loss indeed to Agnes," said Wilfred involuntarily.

"One that has never been replaced," replied Garside.

"What became of him?" asked the young man anxiously.

"You shall hear," said the surgeon. "He left the mansion for particular reasons, but not the neighbourhood; for he had promised the de-

ceased lady, that he would watch over and protect her orphan child, so long as he lived. A considerable sum was left him, under her ladyship's will, and this enabled him to carry out, with others who were almost homeless, a plan which he considered best calculated to foster his intentions. He sought an asylum he had known from boyhood, and which, during rambles amidst the mountains and valleys, he accidentally discovered. Melvil was a zealous botanist, and in one of his excursions he found the entrance to a cave——”

“A light breaks in upon my mind,” exclaimed Wilfred. “The voice, the features, were familiarised by early associations; but the dress—the position—all so different to what I remembered, made it impossible to recognise the good Melvil in——”

“Will-o’-the-Waste,” quickly replied the surgeon; “and whose guardian power has been exercised for the benefit of all. His demented daughter had been placed with a near relative,

but he now resolved to take her within his own charge, and she has been, under Heaven, instrumental to your salvation, as well as his own. Her half-witted condition in some things, and the quick and ready astuteness in others, acted like magic upon the Musqueteers; and her peculiarities made them suppose she was some spectral inhabitant of the valley, which idea Will-o'-the-Waste, or, as we will now call him, Melvil, made subservient, to increase the terrors so necessary for his safety, and the position in the cave, he was so anxious to retain. You are aware of the effect produced by your appearance with Alice on the mountain ridge?"

"I can recollect that circumstance well, it happened so recently."

"In this cave, then, our friend Melvil was able to gather all the information necessary for his purpose, and could shield Miss Monkton more than when he was an inmate of the Hall. Mistress Pucker entertained the highest respect for him, and gathered enough from the Mus-

queteers, particularly from Obadiah Tripe, to frustrate most of their movements ; his own prudence and sagacity mastered the rest. He had arranged, that Agnes Monkton should seek the shelter of my roof, and upon the annoyance she was subjected to from the addresses of Sir Gerard, she left the Hall, and has since been an inmate of this house. I am suspicious of Master Snuffle. I still think he has associates of a dangerous character, and that he would, if he could, remove Miss Agnes to some other asylum. This, he dares not do openly, but may covertly ; and it is something irksome for me, to leave home for any distance on that account. My man-servant, a bold and resolute fellow, always keeps within reach, and has arms at hand, to resist any aggression, should such be attempted. I do not think Master Ephraim would venture upon so bold a step, though, like some hideous vulture whose prey is scented, he silently looks on waiting his opportunity. Thus then are we situated at present ; Melvil

still adopts a disguise, for the purpose of concealment, and it would be difficult to detect him under his assumed appearance."

"I sincerely trust," said Wilfred, "that our excellent friend may not fall into the clutches of his enemies. He is a bold but wary man, yet has hitherto escaped the meshes of the net, adroitly, they supposed, placed for his entanglement."

"You need not fear for Melvil," said the surgeon; "he knows each nook and spot round about this place, and his eye is keen as that of the hawk. In earlier days he had been a soldier, and I have heard, was a bold and daring one; but it pleased a higher Power to turn his heart, and his piety and devotion I know to be the offspring of sincerity. He requested me to state thus much to you, and that during your absence, he should be on the alert for the safety of Miss Monkton."

"This relieves my mind greatly," replied Wilfred, "though I was much pleased to find

she was under your hospitable roof and had a true heart to support her in difficulties."

"I am an old bachelor, Wilfred," said Garside, "but Maria takes charge of my homestead and domestic affairs, and a kinder or more affectionate sister it would be a task for a brother to find. Here Miss Monkton will be safe for a time, and if all the measures now in progress be successful it will not be Melvil's fault if Agnes be not extricated from the hands of those, who have been forced upon her as Trustees."

"Forced they must have been by chicanery—Lady Monkton never made any disposition so totally opposite to her habits and ideas when living. It is a forgery, Garside—the will is a surreptitious one," said Wilfred.

"We entertain the same opinion," replied Garside, "but have not proof sufficient to act upon. There is a clue and a strong one, but a link is wanting, and that will be found in good time. Sir Gerard Monkton hates and

despises Snuffle, and yet the wily fellow has a power over him which it is difficult to define. There will be an outbreak between them ere long, and we shall benefit by the misunderstanding."

During the last few minutes the wind had increased in power and bellowed and puffed over the hills and around the cottage with rough moanings. They both stopped to listen to its wild and impetuous gusts, when a noise was heard from without, as if some one wanted help, and soon after a loud knocking at the door; and before Garside could well start up a second and third summons was given. Wilfred also rose up, but the surgeon said, "remain where you are—I will go above and answer, as I always do, from the window." Garside then went up to the first landing-place and opened the casement calling out—

"Who's there?"

"It is I," said a voice—

"And who are you?" asked Garside.

"I am a stranger," replied the person, "and wish you to come down to Dame Pucker's directly—a gentleman has been thrown from his horse, and is badly injured. We think he belongs to the Hall."

"I rarely go upon such errands at night," said the surgeon, "unless I am summoned by persons I know—You are quite a stranger to me and I think I shall deny you."

"Then the poor gentleman must die I suppose," said the man for it was the voice of a man, "and it would be a hard case. Won't you come, sir?"

Garside pondered for a few moments—he was a kind and most humane man.

The life of a human being might be hazarded if he did not go, and though he usually declined attendance upon the call of a stranger his heart in this instance was softened as he enquired—

"Who sent you upon this errand?"

"Mistress Pucker," replied the man, "the

gentleman is there and she says he ought to be seen to immediately."

"I will come then," replied Garside, "go you on before, and say thus much."

"I will," replied the person.

Garside then came down stairs, and spoke to Wilfred who had heard the conversation.

"If you do not feel tired," said Garside, "perhaps you will remain up until I return? I shall not be long absent, and I wish to speak further upon the subject I had commenced. It is not far to Dame Margery's and I can walk there in ten minutes."

"I am not in the least fatigued," replied Wilfred, "and if you leave me some writing materials, I can occupy myself until you come back."

"Here you have every thing convenient," said Garside unlocking an escritoire close to the fire-place.

He then went into the passage, and putting

on a large roquelaire and providing himself with a lantern, and a thick cudgel, which he usually carried out with him at night, shook Wilfred by the hand, who let him out, and then fastened the door.

The moon was shining brightly, though the wind still came in loud and puffing gusts, moaning and sighing as it swept over the hilly country, though in the valley beneath, little was felt of its influence.

Garside walked steadily on, anxious to get back as soon as possible, and had reached the elevated road-way, just within hail of the hostel, when he was seized upon suddenly by three men, and before he could offer resistance, his arms were mastered, and a cloth or cloak flung over his mouth to prevent his calling out for assistance. He now found he had been entrapped, and that his being sent for, was a mere feint to draw him from home. His mind was calm, and his thoughts wandered there, and glad enough he was that he had requested Wilfred to remain up until his return, as he

felt sure there was some object in view, in drawing him out at so late an hour. Struggling he found would be useless, and a gruff voice whispered close to his ear—

“No mischief is intended—be quiet and within an hour you shall be free again; but offer to call out, or even struggle, and a pistol bullet whizzes through your head.”

This, was a comfortable promise at the dead hour of night, without any hope but his own clear intellect, but which made him resolve to be quiet, had no such threat been held out. He was then led away from the road into a narrow pathway for pedestrians, which made the way shorter, by some distance, to the Hostel to those who knew it.

We will leave the reader to imagine, what passed through the mind of Garside, upon this sudden capture. He had given way to the natural kindness of his benevolent heart, and which the scoundrels well knew, who held him in custody, was most likely to have been acted

upon by some tale of suffering, which they imagined he would feel an interest in, and attend to. It has been seen they were not deceived ; but we must return to the cottage and Wilfred, and to which spot, all the thoughts of the surgeon were be concentrated.

We have mentioned that the breeze was occasionally a rough one, and the moaning of the blast sweeping over the cottage suddenly, made Wilfred start ; fancying some one knocked at the door, for the window-frames cracked with the wind gusts, and appeared as if a rude hand shook them suddenly. He went on with his writing still, though the lamp gleams began to fade, for want of trimming or lack of oil. He raised up the wick with a pair of scissors he found on the mantel-piece, cut the cotton, and once more did it burn brightly. A small clock hung over the fire-place, and which stood at half-past twelve when Garside left, but the hand was now upon one ; so that the surgeon had been, away quite as long as he

expected. There was a depressing feeling upon the young man's mind, he could not shake off, and, indeed, it is an incubus all mortal creatures occasionally endure, so that it will be perfectly understood by the majority of our readers, and is possibly, one of the most distressing nervous ailments, man can encounter. He put aside the writing materials—roused up the logs, sat down before the fire, then walked to and fro the room, and again resumed his position. There was something like a dread of forthcoming evil, which oppressed him, and he fetched a deep respiration, with a heaving chest, to cast aside the weight upon his heart.

The sword was handled and loosened in its scabbard—the pistols carefully examined, to see if the priming were good, and the balls safe within the barrels. The sword answered the hand readily, and the fire-arms were in first-rate order—so far all was right. He kept his

eye upon the clock—minute rolled after minute, and the time stood now, a quarter past one !

What could it mean ? Garside knew the road so well, that without some terrible accident had happened, he would have returned ere now. Many of our readers may have remained up at night, beyond the usual hour, waiting the return of a friend or relative, who had been to some family meeting, and when the fire warmth, has a drowsy effect on the most wakeful. Such an influence was gradually stealing over the brain of Wilfred, and his head, now and then drooped towards his bosom, as sleep stealthily advanced. He would start up as a puff of wind came, and then became tranquil. Still it was a wakeful slumber, which a footfall near might have disturbed. How long this sensation would have lasted we cannot say ; but it is most likely he might have fallen asleep—that the fire would have gone out, and that when he woke

up, he would be chilly and in the dark, or with just a glimmering light from the dying lamp. Were there foot-steps near the door?—did they stop at the window, the curtains of which were drawn? Did they go round the side of the house or not, or was he dreaming? No, no, he was not dreaming. He shook himself, and stood erect, and listened with breathless attention to the least noise. A minute or more had elapsed, as he remained like a statue, listening with eager attention should the sounds come near. He heard nothing more of them, and had just placed the fire-arms in his pocket, when a sort of crash was heard above—a struggling of several together, and a scream, chilling his heart's blood! He heard it—it was the call of Agnes for help! Greyhound never started from the leash more speedily than did Wilfred. His weapon was gleaming in the one hand, while the lamp was held in the other, and he dashed up stairs towards the room whence the noise was

heard. Miss Garside had been roused up, and stood in her night-dress, pallid as a corpse, but unable to ring, or call, or knock for help. She merely pointed to the door, Wilfred tried it, it was fastened from within, he shook the fastening violently, but it did not yield; when finding it resisted all his efforts, and that the screaming still continued, he moved back a few paces, and with the most violent muscular exertion and sudden dash burst open the door, and rushed into the room. He could see, by the moonlight alone, for the lamp had fallen from his hand, and was extinguished that, Agnes was being forced along towards the window by some man masked, and that another was looking into the bed-room, as if waiting to bring her within grasp, so that he might take her down the ladder in his arms, and on which he appeared standing.

Wilfred drew a pistol from his belt, cocked and levelled it, and before the noise of the report was well heard, the fellow appeared to

fall headlong from his position. As the door burst open, some person was dragging Agnes to the window, and from the bed-post, against which she held—when he turned his head—but the face being masked, Wilfred did not see the features. Before a clutch could be made at the fellow, who uttered a loud and terrified cry as he beheld him, the man dashed towards the window, from whence he sprang, (without considering its distance from the ground,) apparently dreadfully frightened. Wilfred had no time to look after him, for though Agnes had, under the fearful excitement of the moment, retained her self-possession, when she found Wilfred near, and help at hand, all power soon after left her, and with a faint moan, she fell into his arms, outstretched to receive her. For some time Miss Monkton remained in an insensible condition, and it was only by the skilful help of Garside (who had returned) that she was awakened from her apparently dangerous

state. Wilfred explained to him what had happened, and Garside in return, mentioned how he had been entrapped, and that he had just been released uninjured from the hands of the parties, who had cunningly devised this scheme, which had luckily been frustrated by Wilfred's happening to be within the house.

The man-servant, who had been some time in bed, was roused up, and with fire-arms in his possession, and a strict order to keep a sharp look-out, he was ensconced near a rousing fire, lit by the servant in the kitchen, who, refused to go to bed again, saying she would sit up for the rest of the night with the groom.

Miss Garside also determined to remain up with Agnes; and though persuaded by her brother to return to her bed, she declined, thinking the man might fall asleep again, unless she looked to him occasionally. The surgeon was fairly knocked up, and Wilfred also. Both

had been long journeys during the day, and nature required rest, and as the arrangements for a watch during the night were satisfactory to Wilfred, he at once acceded to Garside's desire, and went to bed.

CHAPTER XI.

Queen.—'Tis not sleepy business ;
But must be looked to speedily, and strongly.

Cymbeline.

Theseus.—The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve.

Midsummer Night's Dream.

EPHRAIM SNUFFLE was seated before a large fire at Monkton Hall, and creature comforts were liberally spread over the table, beside which, and on the other side, lolling back in his chair, and sipping comfortable potations, was Master John Chalfont. They both seemed to

have enjoyed a good repast, for the remains of it were placed on a side-table, and appeared as if but just removed. Snuffle's eyes were twinkling under the influence of warmth within and without; neither was Chalfont apparently very miserable. For some minutes no word passed between them, when the Hall clock struck twelve, and this startled them, just as if they had received a smart blow.

"Twelve o'clock!" said Snuffle. "In another hour or so, we shall hear how our prospects run. The plan arranged I have little doubt will be successful; and once within our clutches, Miss Monkton shall be safely housed in some asylum, where the church alone has access. It would never do, Master Chalfont, to let so rich a prize escape."

"Not exactly," answered Chalfont, with a fox-like and sinister glance at Snuffle; "not exactly. The odds are in our favour. Sir Gerard is in London, and at present knows nothing

of Miss Monkton's absence ; and the youth disposed of by your sagacity, so that our path is not crossed. And yet, we have one thing not so pleasant, and that is, the plain sense and moral courage of the surgeon. He will leave no stone unturned to find out our trail, and may be troublesome. His character too, stands high, and cannot be assailed."

"Be not so perplexed on that score," said Snuffle, "he has no idea we have agents at hand, and will be thrown off his guard."

"I am not so sure of that," answered Chalfont, "when I was there some short time ago, to sign some papers, he looked sternly and suspiciously ; and when obliged to leave the room, upon a call for his services, his sister remained, and close to the door I observed a stout fellow standing, armed to the teeth. This looked as if he would be on his guard at all times."

"Should he stand too much in the road, so that our intentions are likely to be frustrated,

there are means to have him removed," said Snuffle, with a deep toned, angry, but subdued voice.

"In the same way you had the other one put out of view, I suppose, you mean," said Chalfont. "It would be a hazardous and dangerous experiment."

"We must not stand upon trifles, when so vast a prize is concerned," muttered Snuffle, "our order is in want of funds, and so large a sum as would fall into our hands, should Miss Monkton be persuaded to take the veil, is of the utmost consequence."

"But suppose she stubbornly resists?"

Snuffle gazed hard at Chalfont, and a fiend-like look passed over his face—it was expressive of every demoniacal passion, and the construction put upon it by Chalfont was an answer; for his glance told his companion that his meaning was comprehended.

Chalfont replied, somewhat negligently—

"Poor young lady—she might sink under

the struggle—*naturally* I mean, Snuffle, and should such be the case, you and I, being heirs under the will of Lady Monkton, could arrange all the matters admirably, afterwards.”

This was said with an affected tone of commiseration, and as the parties perfectly understood one another, plainer language was useless.

“I have calculated every thing with mathematical precision,” said Snuffle, “one bad move can be counteracted by a better, and every chance has been so balanced, that I have no fear of failure. In fact, it must and shall be carried out.”

“*Must* and *shall*,” replied Chalfont, are strong words, and readily uttered, but I have an opinion you will not be able to carry out these intentions so rapidly as you imagine. You have my hearty concurrence, and shall have all the aid I can afford you, but you will have work to accomplish, which will require all your sagacity.”

"Your remarks have just the weight they deserve," said Snuffle, "indeed everything you suggest, is listened to, by me, with the utmost respect. In this case, Master Chalfont, I think you are more timid than usual, and imagine a difficulty where none exists. That is, you see a mountain, which will dwindle when closely gazed upon, into a mole-hill!"

"I hope you may be right;" answered Chalfont, "though I am not sanguine, I am not disheartened. You ought to know me too well, to suppose for a moment, that I can yield a *point*, where there is one to be gained; like the blood-hound, I always track *my* victim. The prize may fall within our grasp—it is a rich venture—it will advance us high in the opinion of the order, and the utmost care and ingenuity need be used to clutch the golden treasure!"

"There is much you say, well worthy of notice—but I wish to have Miss Monkton within grasp before Sir Gerard returns to the Hall. We are friendly upon some points, but

on others, not so. He has never been well pleased since the reading of the will, and would thwart me if he could. It was not against my inclination that Miss Monkton left, and took up her abode with the surgeon."

"What mean you?" asked Chalfont.

"This—" answered Snuffle, "to have taken her per-force, from the Hall, would have been a perilous step indeed; but, from the house of Garside, the task is less dangerous. A thousand excuses could be thrown out, and suspicion not rest upon the real actors in the abduction. What think you now?"

"Why, that the idea was a shrewd suggestion of a Jesuit's mind, and could scarcely be supposed to emanate from one, who has not been so deeply trained in the mysteries of the order as I have been."

"You pay me a compliment," said Snuffle.

"No more than you merit," responded Chalfont. "I had scarcely supposed you capable of conceiving so adroit a means for eluding suspicion."

Chalfont had scarcely spoken the last word, when his eyes were fixed on the window, and he fancied he saw a human face looking towards him, with a fierce and menacing expression. The features were ill-defined, yet were they human ones, and though his courage was usually considerable, he did certainly quail under the withering glance which was so strangely, so unexpectedly, and at such an hour of the night, thus glaring upon him ! He was about to touch Snuffle gently, and turn his attention towards the window, but the face vanished, and though he looked keenly and anxiously, it was seen no more. Should he mention the circumstance to Ephraim or not ? It might have been imagination, and would create a smile at his expence ; and it may be remarked that Master Chalfont had a peculiar objection to be an object for ridicule. He once more turned his face to the casement, and again beheld the face. There was a stern and solemn expression in it, that cowed his natu-

ally brave spirit, and under the sudden dread, he seized Snuffle, who was cogitating before the fire, suddenly, by the arm, exclaiming—

“Look—look—look there at the window, we are watched !”

Snuffle started up, turned pale, and shook from the sudden grasp of Chalfont’s hand, and said, with a quivering voice—

“By whom—by whom—where—what window?”

“There,” said Chalfont, swinging him round, “see you that?”

Snuffle turned his eyes in the direction pointed out by his companion, but no face was there, and his heart once more had a quieter motion, and the shaking of the limbs lessened insensibly. He smiled at Chalfont, but it was a ghastly smile, as he replied, in a subdued tone of voice, as if fearing to be overheard—

“I see a window, no more—you must have been mistaken—it was a branch of a large cedar tree which is close to the casement, and

if the wind be rough, it touches the panes now and then."

Though he said this, he scarcely believed it, for such a spectral countenance had appeared to him, before the death of Sir Giles, at that very casement, and in the same room.

"I cannot have been deceived," replied Chalfont, "and that too with my eyes open. Some one was at that window, I am sure, but who it was, I cannot even imagine. We must be guarded in our speech, and may be detected, and our words used to our disadvantage."

"I think you may have been mistaken," said Snuffle, "and under the excitement of your mind, and our conversation, may have imagined such a figure presenting itself."

"As you please," replied Chalfont, with a quiet tone, but still bearing in his mind the fact of such a figure having been seen, "but it will be quite as well, in future, if we talk gently—nay, even in whispering tones, for, from all I hear, this neighbourhood is infested with

strange sights and strange beings. I have little faith in ghostly visitations, and fear much more the intervention of flesh and blood."

"So do I, in some degree," answered Snuffle, "but had you beheld all I have beheld, and heard all I have heard within the last few months, your hair might have stood on end, and the flesh creep over your bones."

"Why, Master Snuffle," said Chalfont, smiling, "I need scarcely say that our bald sconces might prevent the first, though I confess there is a strange feeling which it is sometimes impossible to control, when such scenes occur at this hour of the night."

The clock now struck one !

"Why, how the time flies," exclaimed Snuffle, "an hour beyond midnight. The act must be accomplished by this time, and our prize within grasp."

"I have strange misgivings," said Chalfont, "that something will bar this matter—I am a prophet in some things."

"One would suppose," said Snuffle, "that you were some croaking raven, perched on a tree, and uttering denunciations of evil. How can we fail? Garside is enticed from home—the servant, though bold, is heavy for sleep, and before any interference could take place, our charge would be safe in a nunnery. Psha! it cannot fail—you are daunted at trifles."

"Not I indeed!" said Chalfont, "it must be something more than common to alarm me. You know well enough that the mind sometimes yields to such fancies, though they exist not in reality. There are few men, worthy Master Ephraim, when dark work is in hand, that do not feel peculiar sensations. Midnight has its terrors—it has existed from all time, and the bravest have been infected with its approach. I may be in error in this, but I still maintain, that I have my doubts of success at present."

And his doubts were soon to be facts, for the door was thrown open, when Bernard and

Grimstone rushed into the room, both pallid, and with features of a ghastly character.

"How now?" said Snuffle, with his usual nasal twang, dropping it only when in Chalfont's company, and speaking in his assumed voice "What's the matter?"

"Matter enough," exclaimed Bernard, "we have been foiled!"

"How? And by what means?"

"By *him*," answered Bernard.

"To whom do you allude?" Ephraim enquired, faltering in his speech, from anxiety.

"Why to the *dead man*!" answered the Musqueteer.

"You speak in riddles," said Chalfont, calmly. "Dead men have little influence in such matters."

"But he is *not dead*," replied the Musqueteer, "he lives, and rescued Miss Monkton from our clutches. He fired at Grimstone, who saw the levelled weapon, and, fortunately,

bobbed his head down, and then scrambled from the ladder. Had he not done so, his brains would have been blown out."

"I cannot understand you yet," said Snuffle; "*who is not dead*—Garside do you mean?"

"No, no, that part of the scheme answered well enough; he was enticed from home, and we supposed all was safe. I had Miss Monkton within my arms, and Grimstone was waiting to receive her, when, on turning my head after the pistol shot, I saw—"

"What did you see?" asked Snuffle, with trepidation, and evidently fearing the answer.

"Why, the *Cavalier*! He whom we supposed we had slain by your orders. He was vigorous enough; and had I not rushed from the room, and thrown myself from the window, his weapon would have made clean work of my carcase, for the thrust was fierce and strong."

During the delivery of these few words, the countenance of Snuffle underwent extraordinary

changes. His features were absolutely convulsed with terror, and the bloodless lips and cheeks were like the dead hue of the departed. Here was a circumstance which, if true, set aside all his well-arranged plans. One, whom he supposed slain, was, according to Bernard's statement, in life and health, and preparing, possibly, to wreak vengeance upon his enemies. Here was the stumbling-block to all his hopes, risen, as it were from the grave; and the high and ambitious projects he had foolishly imagined to be built upon such a solid foundation, at once, by "one fell swoop," shattered into fragments! Chalfont observed his aghast and cowed look, and was himself astounded at the intelligence.

Ephraim had always felt some anxiety for the sure report of the death, but yet, non-appearance at the time, and subsequent absence from the Hall, made him pretty well satisfied that the young Cavalier was slain.

"How chap-fallen you look," said Chalfont;

"come, cheer up, you are dismayed at trifles. This may not be true—the report of the fire-arms has an ugly appearance, but dead men seldom pull a trigger. Did he speak, Bernard?"

"There was no time for words," replied the Musqueteer; "I had one glance, and that satisfied me; I did not wait to have a pistol bullet in my body, or to be spitted, for had I not thrown myself from the window, the sword thrust must have been a final one. There was no mistake as to its intention and power."

Ephraim now recovered a little self-possession, and his cheek had some tinge of life-blood, although the old aspen shivering had scarcely passed away, upon hearing the fact of the Cavalier's appearance. He spoke in a stammering voice, as he asked—

"You were not pursued or tracked here, Bernard?"

"No, no," replied Grimstone, "I scampered away first—and was soon followed by Bernard.

He had somewhat shaken himself by the fall, but soon recovered wind, when we hastened here, and came through the usual entrance."

"The Cavalier had enough to do with Miss Monkton," said Bernard, "who was half dead with fright, and required support. She was sinking from terror when he came in, and but for that, we should have had her safely enough."

"What became of the vehicle?" asked Snuffle.

"Oh! I had forgotten that," resumed Bernard; "self-preservation was our first consideration, and I told the man should we be more than an hour not to wait, but look to himself. He knows where to apply for payment."

"He need not do that," said Snuffle; "you had the money, and could have given him what he required."

"I had it certainly," Bernard replied; "but I have it no longer. I suppose it fell

from my vest when I tumbled from the window; and had I known that it *had* fallen, I should not have waited to have picked it up, for I took to my heels as soon as I could, and never once looked behind me. It was a race for life, and a fellow runs his best when thus beset."

Snuffle heard what the Musqueteer said about the coin, but believed not a word of that portion of the story. He knew that gold was the master passion of Bernard's heart, and that a falsehood was a mere *baga-telle*, if it screened the money part of the tale. However annoyed he was, he could scarcely help himself, but he made up his mind in future to keep the purse strings closed up, and dispense his own funds. As to the race for life, he might, under the Musqueteer's circumstances, have made use of his heels, had he been similarly situated, and few had better legs for such a purpose than Master Ephraim Snuffle.

"It is certainly extraordinary," put in Chalfont, "that this young man should come to life just at the moment he would have been better dead. His appearance is a sad stumbling block, and may certainly frustrate all our efforts respecting Miss Monkton."

"Not if a musket ball has any chance of reaching him," said Bernard, in a savage tone of voice, and speaking between his teeth; "I hate to be foiled in an undertaking for which I have received bounty, and shall not be satisfied until the debt is discharged."

"You made a bungling job of it, Bernard; and you, Grimstone, failed, when success was so necessary," said Snuffle, with a snarling tone.

"He fell plump from his horse," replied Grimstone; "no rook picked off from the topmost bough of some high tree ever fell, apparently, more lifeless! He may have a charmed life, and require a silver bullet."

"It would be more prudent," said Chalfont,

said Chalfont, "instead of bandying words, to consider what is best to be done under present circumstances. Our situation is by no means a secure one, and measures must be devised to make it so. Have you any suspicion that he knew you?"

"It is impossible he could," said Bernard. "You see our dress is quite altered, and the masks hid the features both of Grimstone and myself. Besides, it was a word and a blow kind of work, and Miss Monkton took up all his attention."

"He will not remain long there," said Snuffle; "couldn't you dog his steps, and, should a favourable opportunity offer, take charge of him, and place him in safe custody?"

"Aye," replied Bernard, "I know—mother earth—six feet by two, and a shroudless grave! That's what you intend, I suppose, Master Snuffle?"

"You interpret my meaning harshly," replied Snuffle, with a voice full of hypocritical tenderness; "I say, dog his steps, and place him in sure custody."

"And what could be safer custody than the homestead I would prepare?" said the Musqueteer, in a brutal tone of voice, and with a sullen, malignant glance. "Should a fair opportunity present itself, and I am one of the mourners, I'll take care the earth is well trampled down. Had this been done at first, all the confusion might have been avoided. If I ever leave a task unfinished, I am certain to be thus perplexed; but it shall never happen again if I can help it."

"Let your aim be more steady next time," said Chalfont, with the most perfect composure. "The hand will tremble now and then, but a practised Musqueteer could scarcely fail."

"I had not the musket with the rest. That

stay for the eye and hand would have made the mark safe. I had but a small fusee, fit only for a boy's plaything. We chose them as more readily handled on the instant," answered Bernard.

"Another cause was the rapid motion of the horseman—we fired at a venture, and not at a fixed object. I could have sworn, however, that the bullets had been effective," said Grimstone; "but we were told to hurry away if we were sure the job was done."

"It is useless thus to waste more words, when it is pretty certain the Cavalier, as he is called, escaped. The thing now is, to rectify previous errors, and let a second attempt be successful," said Chalfont.

"I am of your opinion," replied Snuffle; "you had better return to your hiding-place, and we will hold counsel together, when early to-morrow you shall have our determination."

"Whatever it be," replied Bernard, with a

savage grin, "mine is made up. He shall die, if powder and bullet can reach him! I have a long account to settle, and shall not sleep easy until it be paid. Come along, Ralph—*we will hold counsel too*—over the bottle."

This was said aside to Grimstone, when they left the room.

"Where did you pick up that execrable ruffian?" asked Chalfont; "he is, without exception, the most brutal fellow I ever met with."

"I found him in the ranks of the Musqueteers; the regiment has now left for the metropolis, as affairs there, are but in an uncertain state. He was a ready-made villain, and wanted little instruction. Pay him well, and he would venture upon any task," rejoined Snuffle.

"Likely enough," said Chalfont; "he would murder any one for payment, I presume you mean to say."

"Just so," said Snuffle.

"What a *terrible* thing to reflect upon such matters," remarked Chalfont.

"It is indeed," replied Snuffle, "*terrible* enough. He is a bloodhound that would follow a very slight trail!"

"I feel sleepy," said Chalfont, "and shall retire to rest, as the morning creeps on, and I must be away again early."

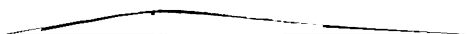
"I feel heavy too," observed Snuffle; "you know the way to your dormitory. Good night, and may your sleep be tranquil."

"*Pax vobiscum*," ejaculated Chalfont, in a tone of humility, as if he was a pattern of virtue and sanctity.

"*Et cum spiritu tuo*," responded Snuffle, when the twain shook hands.

Chalfont lit a hand lamp from the one burning on the table, and each sought his sleeping apartment. Sleeping apartment! Could such men sleep? Yes, they could, and they did, and in the denunciations against Bernard, they

forgot, or appeared to forget, that an astute, crafty, but cowardly scoundrel, who uses another for base and wicked purposes, is of all villains the greatest, and whose sin is of all sin the worst and heaviest upon the soul, when the day of reckoning comes !



CHAPTER X.

Prince Henry—Wherein crafty, but in villany?

Wherein villanous, but in all things,

Wherein worthy, but in nothing.

Henry IV., Part 1st.

Act 2. Scene 4.

WE must now retrace our steps for a short space, for the purpose of stating what took Sir Gerard Monkton so suddenly from the Hall. His anger was beyond bounds, at this unexpected barrier to his hopes relative to Miss Monkton, and though he had made the most decided overtures to her, and even offered his hand and fortune, he had been peremptorily refused. This was past endurance; for his

naturally proud and haughty spirit was ill able to meet with a rebuff, and it was the more galling, coming, as it did, from a quarter, where he expected but a short lived and coy resistance. He had a poor opinion of women, and had formed it not from the right source, but from a dissipated career in earlier life, and associating with those alone, who degraded the fairest portion of human nature. Had he succeeded in overcoming the scruples of Agnes, he considered that the trustees might have been bought over to his side by a handsome bribe, for he knew the cupidity of Master Snuffle, and that his idol was gold. He little knew, however, the subtle characters of the parties with whom he had to deal, or the reasons which induced them to act as they did. Both had the same object in view, but the one wished to gain the broad lands and moneys left to Agnes for his own purposes of ambition, which the others would grapple for the same object, but for the Church and the Order to which they belonged.

Monkton was bold and crafty; but the subtlety of Snuffle and Chalfont was too much for him to overcome, and he was resolved to bide his time, and seize, like a vulture would, his prey, upon the first chance presenting itself, whereby his ends could be gained. He had received, shortly after the death of Cromwell, a peremptory order to return to London with the Musqueteers—the regiment was a crack one, and could be depended upon, though Bernard, Grimstone, and Tripe had formed a part of it. The two former deserted, under the promise of future reward, should they be successful, and a handsome sum down. Obadiah went with the rest, for he was glad to make a retreat, from a place he dreaded. The valley and its inhabitants were terrible to him, and he would rather a thousand times have volunteered upon a forlorn hope, than ventured another visit to that haunted spot.

Occasionally, a dark cloud would pass over Sir Gerard's mind, and his ill-humour and

morose character became almost intolerable. His position was a critical one, for the fortunes and chances of Richard Cromwell's success were but at a low ebb, and the uncertain movement of General Monk made them more obscure. He bided his time, for his mind was irresolute as to the conduct he should pursue; and though he hated the Stuarts, yet, should the royal power make head, it would become a question under which banner he should retain command. His military talents were considerable—the soldiers looked upon him as a resolute and skilful officer, and felt secure under his guidance and command. This, he knew well enough, gave him great influence; the period was a military one, and his skill and resolution were known and appreciated by the Parliament; and not lost upon the mind of the General, who held a balance of power most formidable. The Coldstream regiment had made an advanced move towards London, and the rest

of the army were following, slowly and cautiously.

It is not our intention, however, in this domestic narrative, to enter upon historical matters, more than to observe, that it was a time of great moment—that the stubborn Roundheads were to be feared, and if possible conciliated, while the waverers were not so difficult to deal with. Colonel Monkton was of the latter class, should the moment be ripe for change; but at present, he was a firm adherent to the policy and intentions of the Republican form of Government. He had been presented to Richard Cromwell, and met with a most favourable reception, and thanks were showered upon him in profusion for his firm adherence to the father, and a hope, if not a command given, that he would be as favourably disposed towards the son.

Time, as it steadily advances, brings forward worldly matters, and as assuredly extinguishes worldly hopes! The youthful aspirant for

earthly pleasures, sees nothing before him but a sunbeam, shining through a clear blue-sky ; while he, who has passed the ordeal of such days has a keener vision, and behind such skies and such gleams of light, he expects darker shadows and more gloomy clouds. It would be a barrier indeed, for the one entering into life, if there was not something buoyant to help him along the worldly road, and a wise and merciful Providence directs all things for the best ; the horizon ; for him gleams with brightness, and shadows not forth the thorns and briars he may have to struggle with. Sir Gerard Monkton had seen all these things—they had faded before him, and though his position in life was a good one—his means ample, and his power considerable, yet, was he dissatisfied and perplexed. He had some idea of a future looming in the distance, but it was a faint streak of light, and held forth no comfort. His religious belief was vague, and his mind therefore, received no solace from

it, but which steadfastly believed and pursued, smooths the path-way of life, and leads us to an immortal home !

Sir Gerard Monkton had left the Hall under the care of Master Snuffle, with a permission that Chalfont could take up his residence there during his absence, and which might be for a short space, or a longer period, should the political state of affairs assume a darker shadow for the Roundheads.

Upon the regiment being ordered to proceed to the metropolis, Bernard and Ralph deserted, with several others, whose loose habits and wild conduct rendered the discipline of a military life irksome to endure, and they took up their residence in the cavern, which had been discovered ; and from which Will-o'-the-Waste vanished, leaving no trace behind which could lead to a discovery of his present residence. Snuffle had promised largely, and had paid down handsomely, and the supplies for the parties within the cave, were principally drawn

from the neighbourhood by fraud or force, and some from the Hall. Here, however, but a small modicum could be given, as a certain sum was merely allowed for the domestic expences, and for Snuffle's use, and beyond which, the accounts were strictly looked to, and forwarded every fortnight for Sir Gerard Monkton's inspection. No one attended to pecuniary matters with a sharper eye than did Sir Gerard, and though Snuffle was a shrewd and good calculator, his items were too carefully noted to be carelessly thrown in. Ephraim, however, had not made a bad use of Sir Gerard's peculiarities, and knew his habits, and where he kept his money. Bernard had pointed out the recess, from whence he received payment in the first instance, for his murderous attack upon Wilfred; and Snuffle soon visited the place, and found a fair supply of gold in a bag, huddled up in a corner of it. When Sir Giles' condition became hopeless, and his intellect confused, this money was abstracted and used

as Snuffle thought might best answer his ends. Unscrupulous as he was—cruel as he was—yet in heart he was a coward. Could he effect his designs by other hands, he cared little how they were carried out, and his companion, John Chalfont, knew his mental calibre sufficiently well, to act upon it, for purposes he had arranged, should be effected as *he* desired.

Geology has shewn us, that monstrous animals have been formed to devour the smaller ones, and as this vastness of creation fades, so did others swallow up those beneath them, and thin out the increasing numbers, which otherwise would have been overwhelming. Thus it was here—Chalfont was a more wily and powerful animal than Snuffle, not only bodily but mentally; and he intended, upon the first convenient opportunity to crush him, and take up the spoils which would accrue, from the completion of their plans for Miss Monkton's abduction. John Chalfont had been thoroughly initiated in all

the craft of his order, and though many of the Jesuits were men of high and commanding intellect, and acted solely from an idea they were pursuing a correct line of duty, in advancing the influence of the Church ; yet here, as in all sects, bad men were to be found, who, under the mask of religion, were willing to advance their own interests and fortunes. This was Chalfont's intention, and we are sorry the world generally, has too many like him. There was a matter, however, in which Snuffle had hitherto baffled him, and, notwithstanding every manœuvre, he was kept in the dark upon this one point ; and it was, he considered, a material one. Who was Wilfred ? He must have another name ; and yet, during the whole time he had held communion with Snuffle, this *other* name had never passed Ephraim's lips. That he had a dread of him, Chalfont knew—that he was some one standing in Snuffle's road to success, he also knew, but there, his knowledge ended, and he was just as

ignorant upon this subject as our readers are at this moment. This knowledge he would seek out, and if in the power of cajolery and cunning, would obtain it. He knew Snuffle's failing, and that, under the influence of the bottle, he sometimes let out more than he intended, and thus Chalfont gained much of his information, and which he acted upon, though he took special good care not to let him even imagine, that he had been more communicative than the case required. He was told that this barrier—this Wilfred, had been removed. He knew that he was called the *Cavalier*, that nothing remained to mar the hopes of Miss Monkton's capture, and thus mature their plans. And yet, on a sudden—like a thunder-clap—or like a blow stricken, and which felled the person to the earth, did this information reach them, at the very moment Snuffle supposed all was right. It has been seen, that Chalfont was not so certain this affair would be so suc-

cessful as Ephraim ; so that he was not much astonished at the tale, told both by Bernard and Grimstone, of Wilfred's appearance ; yet, he came there at the critical moment ? How they could have been so mistaken as to his death, he could not imagine. He only supposed that Sauffle was deceived, either by Bernard or his own folly, in believing all that scoundrel thought fit to tell him. In Chalfont's mind, Bernard's information was just worth what the money was worth, used for such purposes, and no more ; and imagined that the Musqueteer, who, Snuffle stated, made gold his idol, would draw upon Ephraim's terror, and thus upon his resources, until nothing remained to give on that score.

Chalfont had been much struck with the beauty and innocent manner of Agnes Monkton. He was a man of strong passions, and though to the world they were kept under restraint, yet, when a fair opening became visible

to give them rein, he used the chance unscrupulously. Could he get her once within his meshes, her person and fortune might be his, and in some distant land, he would enjoy the fruition of his hopes, unfettered by Snuffle or Sir Gerard Monkton. He was by no means an ill-favoured man—his face was pale, and his eyes dark and expressive, and the intellectual power being considerable, his general bearing and features were gentlemanly and aristocratic. He had mixed much in the world in earlier life, and dark and terrible passions and scenes had been witnessed and participated in. Snuffle and he had, for some time, studied at St. Omer, but they had long been separated, and it was by a mere accident, the couple were thrown together again. Each wished assistance, and each had his own object in view, and though, to a certain extent, they worked together, the aim of both was the same—the person and possession of Miss Monkton and her property.

We may here close this chapter, as the reader will soon understand how affairs were likely to proceed, so far as the twain were concerned. It was necessary to our narrative—that the characters of Snuffle and Chalfont should appear more distinctly. They were both crafty cruel and worldly minded men, though the intellect of Chalfont was above that of Snuffle and it was therefore probable he would attain the mastery.

CHAPTER XI.

Bolingbroke.—I see some sparkles of a better hope,
Which elder day's may happily bring forth.
But who comes here?

Richard II.

Act 5. Scene 3.

THE terror caused by the attack upon her person had made a powerful impression upon Agnes Monkton. For some time, she had enjoyed under the roof of the kind surgeon, a peace of mind and quiet she had long required, and hoped her perplexities were to an extent

"and I have desired her to remain in bed, and endeavour to get some sleep. Maria tells me, she has been restless and uneasy, and that she has received a great shock, which we must endeavour to remedy by soothing attention."

"Can I see her before I leave?" asked Wilfred with emotion.

"I am sorry to deny you," replied Garside, "but it would be adding to our present difficulty, and might be mischievous."

The young man made no reply, but a shade of melancholy crossed his face, as the refusal was given. Garside saw this, for his eye was quick, and his knowledge of human nature profound, and he was very sorry he was compelled to act thus.

Agnes, whose frame had for some time been delicate, owing to her recent loss, and the terrible annoyance she had received at Monkton Hall, had scarcely recovered from one

shock, when this attack again roused up the embers (scarcely slumbering) to be awakened anew.

The surgeon felt for Wilfred, but he had no other object in view than the good of both, knowing as he did, that any fresh exciting cause, might bring on a train of symptoms of an alarming character, and permanently injure Miss Monkton's health. He looked towards Wilfred kindly, (who was doing little credit to the meal, or Miss Garside's culinary arrangements) and said, in a friendly tone of voice—

“You may think me too cautious, my dear Wilfred, in refusing so slight a request, but under ordinary circumstances, I should not hesitate to grant it. You little know the perplexity and annoyance Agnes has endured, for some time past. She is acutely sensitive now, but under judicious treatment, will speedily recover—indeed, she had almost reached a convalescent state, when these scoun-

drels assailed her last night ! I am sure it is from the old source, and that the villains are in league with Snuffle. We shall circumvent all their stratagems, but I must not be led away by any night-calls, unless I know the patient well. Come, come, Wilfred, take some breakfast—you need refreshment before you proceed on your homeward journey.”

“Homeward journey !” exclaimed the young man in a melancholy tone of voice. “Alas ! sir, my journey has no such pleasure awaiting its termination. I have but a few hours to remain here, and must make the best of my way towards the regiment, which but a few days since passed the Coldstream, and is now on its way to London. I am, I may say, a homeless man !”

There was something touching in the tone of voice, in which the few last words were delivered, and they made the surgeon’s eyes twinkle, though he quickly checked the emotion he really felt, for Wilfred’s peculiar con-

dition, not wishing the young man should observe it. He made a sign to his sister to leave the room, as he wished to speak with him upon matters, which concerned him. Garside looked round, and finding she had obeyed his wishes, he commenced as follows—

“We were disturbed in our conversation last night, Wilfred, by the fellows who entrapped me from home, and I was prevented saying what I wished. Of this be assured, though a wanderer for a time, you have a home and a right good one, but where it is, or how you are to gain it, is known to *one* alone.”

“For Heaven’s sake tell me who that *one* is, so that I may instantly enquire of him, and unravel the mystery which enshrouds me !”

“I wish I had the power to do as you desire—it is a natural one ; but my lips are sealed for the present, and I can only speak out when permitted. I say again, you have a

home, and a right good one, and in the fitting hour it will be shewn to you."

"Why, not at once tell me this secret?" asked Wilfred anxiously—

"The pear is not yet ripe," answered Gar-side, "I have permission to say thus much—I hoped it would cheer you up, and remove to an extent, the anxiety in which you so long have been kept."

"It only seems to increase the mystery," replied Wilfred sighing, "I can see no road open, but submission to your will."

"Not to mine, Wilfred—not to mine—it is the will of the kindest and best of men, one to whom you are indebted for life. I have said the pear is not ripe yet—you will understand what I mean."

"That I am to be left in suspense," replied the young man in a desponding tone, "and see the fruit like Tantalus, which I cannot gather, to quench the burning thirst of curiosity. What cause can be assigned for this secrecy, or why am I told anything?"

"It is, that you may see hopeful days yet—you are young, bold and impetuous, and might frustrate by some rashness the prudence and caution which has ever guided—"

"Ah!" exclaimed Wilfred, "a light breaks in upon my mind—Andrew Melvil, or as he was known to me as Will-o'-the-Waste—he is the friend, he is the possessor of my secret—Let me seek him—let me throw myself at his feet and implore him to lighten my heart, and explain the mystery of my birth?"

"You will not have to travel far to find him," said a tall handsome man with a countenance whose lineaments were marked by anxiety—yet had the stamp of kindness and benevolence, joined to a bold and open brow, and most expressive dark eyes. The face was pale, but had a noble expression, and he smiled when he said these words, entering by a side door, close behind where Wilfred was seated.

The young man started up from his chair—

he remembered the features, though the bronzed or stained hue of the skin was gone and the hair carefully gathered up, and the costume quite altered. Andrew Melvil wore a plain dark suit, such as a gentleman of the day would assume on ordinary occasions. He had a rapier and a dagger close to the grasp of his right hand, and a more manly or military looking figure, it would have been difficult to find. Wilfred himself was tall and handsomely proportioned—his features were open and bold, and his general appearance vastly prepossessing, but he was shorter by half a head than Melvil, whose height was above the usual height of man, and when in his gaberdine, he had to stoop, to hide his tall commanding person from detection.

“You have returned to us somewhat unexpectedly,” said Garside, who did not appear in the slightest degree astonished at his sudden appearance, “and much earlier than I had

anticipated. You are welcome, Melvil—ever welcome—and I feel my threshold honoured when you cross it.”

“You are kind, very kind,” replied Melvil, whose voice had that peculiar softness, and modulation, which gave to each word its true meaning, “I should be very sorry to come under its lintel, did I not feel sure I should experience a gentle reception; I am always glad to be a guest under your roof, for I feel that I am a welcome one.”

“You well may so, say, Melvil,” replied the surgeon, “we have known each other some years, and our friendship has been cemented by time.

“It has indeed,” resumed the surgeon, “and the world would be a much happier one, were man to foster such gentle feelings with his fellow man. The calamities which assail us in most cases, arise from our imprudence and negligence—I am sorry to say I see too much of both.”

During these few brief sentences, Wilfred remained silent, and was pleased to hear the affectionate greetings from such persons. He looked hardly and earnestly at Melvil, who merely smiled upon him, as he took a chair, and asked for some breakfast, mentioning that he had left Dame Pucker's early, and taken a circuitous path to escape notice. The meal was but a frugal one, and Melvil soon was satisfied, when requesting the things to be removed, and which being done, he desired them both to be seated, as he wished to have some conversation.

"You are anxious, I have no doubt young man, to hear the secret which I have long known, as to your position in society, and the necessity which has existed, and still exists, for its being kept within *my* bosom. To no human soul will I tell it—nay, even Garside, honourable as he is, and a fast friend to both, is ignorant of facts, which, at the proper time will be brought to light. When you wrote

that note to Miss Monkton by my desire, it was but to let her know you were in safety, and the guarded tone of it, must have convinced you, that I had special reasons not to divulge it, until all my plans were ripened. I have a high opinion of you, Wilfred, but like most young men, you are hasty and impetuous, and might act under the impulse of the moment, and endeavour to carry out measures, which can alone be accomplished, by prudent circumspection. When at the cave, I ever resisted your importunate inquiries, but not with unkind intentions. Be assured therefore, you will be righted, but it must be left to me to have it done as I think best. Bide the time—be patient, for by such conduct alone can I conduct your cause to a happy issue.”

“Dear friend,” replied Wilfred rising and grasping the hand of Andrew Melvil, and the pressure was affectionately returned. “I will place implicit faith in your sagacity. You need not wonder that I am anxious, or

that my uncertain position gives me pain. Forgive me for being so importunate, and believe me, I will, as you say, bide the time, when you may deem it proper to tell me the secret of my birth."

"You have chosen a prudent course," said Melvil, "I have ample means of redressing you, and shall take care you do not suffer from my over precaution. Courage—you have crafty and wicked enemies, and no stone will be left unturned to carry out their intentions. We live in critical days, and the political horizon is dark enough—what will be the issue, Heaven alone can tell! Should the royal cause prevail, all will be right enough—if otherwise, I have my doubts, though even then, my hopes rest upon *One* who never forsakes the righteous. Master Snuffle is an evil spirit, but his coadjutor, Chalfont, is a much more dangerous person."

"What brought him to this neighbourhood?" asked Garside.

"I know not," replied Melvil, "unless it be mischief. I knew him some years ago, when a soldier myself. My traffic with the world; taught me a good lesson, and from which I profited. *He* mingled amidst it, in the same service, but all his ends were vicious. Our career has been a strange one—side by side have we threaded life together. The scenes I was compelled to witness disgusted me. Chalfont, on the contrary, appeared gratified by what he daily became familiar with, and in after life, we found ourselves in the same college, studying divinity."

"In the same college," said Wilfred, evidently surprised.

"Aye, in the same college," answered Melvil.

"Then," said Wilfred, "you were in a ——"

"Roman Catholic one," replied Melvil, "and though we both came into it about the same time, our objects were somewhat differ-

ent. I had seen enough of a cold hearted world, and wished for some peaceful asylum. Chalfont had also been a pilgrim upon the same road, but he was soured by the treatment he had received, and I fear not chastened by the scenes he had witnessed. There is peace to be gained in so tranquil a spot, if humbly and truly sought, and I have reason to give *Him* thanks for having entered it."

"I was not aware," said Wilfred, "that you were a member of that Church."

"I am a member of the Church of Christ," said Melvil, with solemnity, "and no other. There are differences as to forms and ceremonies, but I trust I am charitable enough to suppose, that all who have a pure heart, and believe in the promises of scripture will receive salvation."

"You are peculiar in your views, then," interrupted Garside. "Your Church, if it be your Church, is harsh in its denunciations against all who differ with its dogmas."

"It is so, I confess it," replied Melvil, "generally speaking; but there are very many who have a kindred spirit with mine, and who would hold out the hand of fellowship to all who enter within the portals *He* has erected."

"Whether Protestant or not, but probably I should say Heretic?" added Garside.

"Precisely so," answered Melvil, "and that it may please *Him* in the fulfilment of His promises to bring all under one fold, and *One* shepherd, is the prayer and hope of my existence."

"I fear that hour is far distant," said Garside, "religious squabbles have been the bane of this country for many a long day, and I see but little hope of amendment."

"The days of man," said Melvil, with a steady tone of voice, "are but as the blades of grass under the scythe of the mower, erect for awhile, and then to be cut suddenly down, and wither in brief space."

"But to appear again," said Garside.

"Not quite so," answered Melvil, "once cut down, the field, so verdant before, falls lifeless beneath the scythe, and Man himself before the stroke of time."

"There is a marked difference however," said Garside, smiling.

"There is indeed," replied Melvil, "a very marked difference. Man, if he believes, and repents of his transgressions, will be received into immortality, and this earth be seen by him no more. The field recovers its beauty in the spring, to be again cut down by the same process, in the summer. The grass is not the same grass, but has grown anew, and so on from year to year."

"You would lead me to suppose, then, that when man is cut down by his enemy, Death, he does not rise again?"

"By no means," replied Melvil, "I should be sorry you should thus interpret my mean-

ing. He rises again in the spirit—earth, to him, has fled—the grass once cut down, withers and dies.”

“It would be a blessing to the earth indeed,” said Garside, with a voice full of deep, but subdued emotions, “were all Christians so charitably disposed one to another.”

“The time will come,” replied Melvil, “when the blessing of which you speak will spread over the earth, and cover it with heart-felt prayer! But not yet, not yet. The words are sent forth in a voice of thunder, and *His* promises must be fulfilled. Where is Nineveh! Where is Babylon! Where are the mighty nations which spread power and riches over the earth, as it then existed? Destroyed and levelled with the dust!”

“True enough,” replied Garside, “and the warnings they should convey, are little heeded.”

“Perhaps we are wandering from our present subject of meeting, and are discussing

matters more vast and important than we can grapple with. Wilfred is anxious to leave, as his absence soon expires, and a soldier's duty must be attended to. Is this so, Wilfred?"

"It is," replied the young man, "though I confess my anxiety for the state of Agnes is paramount to any other."

"Be comforted then on that score," said Garside, "she is under my protection and care, and a second attempt at abduction will be put out of our enemies' power. She will be carefully guarded and tended."

"And more than this," put in Melvil, "I have a sure eye on Master Snuffle, and his myrmidons. Each passage or entrance—nay, every nook of the Hall is known to me, and I can overhear much when they little expect I am so near. I have words of comfort to report:—General Monck, though he moves steadily and warily, is strongly suspected of favoring the royal cause. Should he once declare his views on that point, the

matter will soon be settled. He is the idol of the army, and that is a potent lever for him, on which to raise up the Stuarts."

"I have little doubt of the issue, should he be well disposed towards the exiled family," said Garside, "the Roundheads are at variance—the Parliamentary forces divided into sections, and Richard Cromwell incapable of concentrating measures, which would have been easy, to the comprehensive intellect of his father. All these are points in our favour."

"Material ones I confess," replied Melvil, "and they whisper hope and consolation. We must have patience, and move with the current that may guide us to the haven we seek. What time have you now to spare, before you must depart, Wilfred?"

"I shall leave in the evening," replied the young man, "but ——"

"Aye, I know what you are about," said Garside, smiling, "you would see Agnes. Now, be guided by me—pray do not let her be

again agitated, or the nervous energy may be further depressed, and my skill rendered valueless."

"I would second this sound advice," said Melvil, "it is perfectly reasonable, and deserves attention. However, *my* time also is precious, and I have work upon my hands which must not be postponed. Farewell then, Wilfred, for the present! Cheer up—be of firm heart, and all will be well."

He shook the young man's hand affectionately, and departed.

Wilfred looked after him as he left the room, and fetched a deep sigh, so deep indeed, as to startle Garside, who turned towards him, and observed tears stealing down his cheek; but which he dashed away with his hand, when he found himself noticed.

CHAPTER XII.

Florizel.— ————— *Camillo,*

Preserver of my father, now of me ;

The Medicine of our house ! how shall we do ?

Winter's Tale.

Act 4. Scene 4.

HE, who has swept along the smooth current of life, should indeed be a grateful man, but, unfortunately, this is not always the case. The very gentleness of the stream leads him to suppose, all might pass over the same water in a similar manner, and that it is owing to his own superior merit such has been

his lot. Grief, though it be hard to bear, chastens the mind, and prepares man for that everlasting home, mentioned by Melvil, and who was indeed a christian in the true sense of the word.

He had been an orphan boy, and obliged to push his way in life—he had no friends on whom to rely—no sister—no brother—no one on whom he could lean for help in the world, but, by a steady line of conduct, and devout belief in the inspired volume, had been sustained through many hard and severe trials, and passed the stormy and fiery ordeal of youthful life. All to him was now serene—he had placed his hopes Above, and was prepared, when it pleased God to call him, to resign his spirit peacefully. Enemies he had none, save such as Snuffle and Chalfont, and those with whom they acted; and every virtuous man has similar antagonists to deal with; but has a powerful hand to sustain him in this conflict with the world. Melvil would not have ex-

changed his present state of mind, for all the riches of the earth.

Lady Monkton, during an indisposition of some severity, had been recommended by Garside, (when capable of being moved,) to a warmer climate, and had proceeded to the South of France. Shortly after her arrival, this indisposition was renewed, and she was desirous of receiving spiritual advice. Andrew Melvil gave this assistance, and was most indefatigable in his kind attention to the invalid.

What took place during these visits to the apparently sinking lady, was locked within his own bosom, and divulged to no one. He was observed by the female attendant, after his first interview, to leave the room much agitated, and his face was pale and thoughtful, as if some heavy grief, oppressing the poor lady's heart, had been confided to him under the secrecy of his sacred office. For many weeks, Lady Monkton hovered between life and death

—at one time rallying up greatly, and again falling into a state of severe nervous depression. The disease, to the acute perception of Melvil, was more mental than bodily, and he was perfectly assured this opinion was a correct one, after his second interview with the invalid, and to whom, upon her earnest entreaty, he administered the rights of the Romish Church. In vain, does the most skilful physician use the resources of his art for the cure of such maladies—the disease is too deep seated in the nervous organization, and the heart involuntarily sympathises too much with sorrow, for medicine to touch. He may palliate urgent symptoms, and alleviate pain, but there his power ends; and he finds all his knowledge fade into insignificance, before this terrible mischief.

Garside, we have said before, was a scientific man, and his knowledge, from studious habits, greater by far, than that possessed by the general body of the profession. He saw plainly

enough the deep-seated mental sorrow ; and that it was absolutely necessary for the existence of Lady Monkton, she should go to a more genial climate, and have change of scene. What the grief was, *he* never knew ; and he was a man of too much delicacy of feeling, to ask any further questions than such as were indispensably necessary, for the treatment of the sick patient. Time, however, the conqueror of all, with judicious treatment and kind advice from Melvil, overcame the disease—that is, softened its severity, and Lady Monkton prepared to return homeward. Little Agnes had missed her much, and she was too young to quit her home, and had been left at Monkton Hall, under the care of a steady and faithful servant. The fond mother's heart had turned to her child during this absence, and fancying her disease a mortal one, and that they might never meet on earth again, had confided all her wishes to Andrew Melvil, who promised to observe them as faithfully as his

power admitted. Her ladyship had written an urgent letter to Sir Giles, and had made a strong appeal to his feelings (not quite blunted), requesting permission to bring home this kind friend, from whom she had received such comfort, and an assent was returned of no very agreeable character. Melvil himself mentions in the last chapter, that he had been much in the world, and had sought the shelter of a monastery, as an asylum from its troubles. He could not resist the importunate request and solicitations from Lady Monkton, that he would proceed with her and her servants to England, and there undertake the education both of her daughter and Wilfred, then a resident with them. He did return with them—he did educate, morally and religiously, the charges placed under his care; and a more sincere or faithful teacher children could not have. They imbibed the truthful words, and his own moral conduct and gentle bearing made him loved, not feared; and it would be

well for those who undertake the training of young hearts, if they followed the steps of this most excellent man. Severity terrifies, seldom subdues; but gentleness and kind advice, backed up by example, is the sure way to guide even the most violent tempers, and lead them onward in the path of virtue.

Strange incidents occur in this life, and parties very distant from each other are brought into contact, by which friendships are cemented. Had not Melvil visited a friend, he would have been at St. Omer's, in the northern part of "*La Belle France*," instead of the southern, and he, and Lady Monkton and Wilfred with Agnes, might have been as ignorant of each other as the Esquimaux is of the red Indian.

During the lifetime of Lady Monkton, Melvil was comparatively happy, though the waning frame and decaying condition of this kind lady, were not lost upon his acute perception. The hand of the destroyer was stealthily but

surely advancing, and but a brief space existed between this mortal pilgrimage and the grave.

Master Snuffle had gradually advanced himself in the good graces of Sir Giles, and soon after the decease of Lady Monkton, Melvil was subjected to every annoyance which a petty spirit can shew to one above it, and who is consequently feared. In his wanderings about the old mansion, he found out panels covering recesses—secret passages, some of them diverging into the garden, while others communicated with the dormitories, so as to favour escape should such necessity arise ; which in earlier periods of our history, oftentimes became necessary for self-preservation. This annoyance, and these paltry efforts to dislodge him from the Hall, were at last effectual ; for he found his presence displeasing to Sir Giles ; and though his heart was wrung with anguish, when he left the place in which he had hoped to have lived and died, his feelings were overborne

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with grief, and he could not avoid shedding tears. The parting from Agnes was most trying—she was now able to appreciate his kindness and love, and she clung to him with such power, that it was absolutely necessary he should tear himself away, before she was overcome by her grief! He did not leave Monkton Hall without a firm resolution to be close upon the domain; and during his wanderings, he found out one of the inmates of the cave who had received a severe fall, and with his own and Garside's skill he was able to render the poor fellow effectual service, whose gratitude was unbounded. He was let into the secret of the opening, and the surgeon and himself were surprised to find, that the man who had received the injury, was known to them some time before, having been one of the many who had favoured the Royal, and not the Parliamentary cause;—it was our friend Gilbert, already known to the reader. The few who had collected together in these

mountain passes for safety, were, in fact, homeless men, and without a leader to guide them in their perilous and peculiar position. It struck Melvil, that under the assumed name of Will-o'-the-Waste, and favoured by Garside, who spoke of him as a friend, who could serve and counsel them, he could still remain in the locality, and watch over, and probably protect Miss Monkton, should such protection be needed. In earlier life he had married, and lost, when most needed, one of the fondest and best of friends—a most devoted and affectionate wife—one who cheered his heart when sorrow assailed him, and made his homestead, humble though it was, seem to him a palace! She bore him a daughter—Alice! The poor girl had formed an attachment for a young subaltern in the regiment to which he belonged, who deserted her for a more wealthy bride, under which blow she lost her reason, after a long and dangerous fever. He had placed her with friends abroad,

but his position being altered, it became necessary she should be under his own care ; and he knew a poor and honest, but houseless girl, whom he could procure as a servant to look to her. This residence in the valley, and his wanderings about the country, made every nook and ridge, and mountain pass, known to him ; and in these walks, for exercise in moonlight evenings, he was often accompanied by his daughter, who sprang from ridge to ridge, from fissure to fissure, with elastic boundings and fearless intrepidity. Such was the position of Melvil, when, as Will-o'-the Waste, we first introduced him to the reader's notice. It was necessary to explain therefore how Melvil became so versed in the intricacies of Monkton Hall, and the ease and dexterity with which he threaded the mountain passes, wherein the cave in the valley was situated—also the manner in which he first became known to Lady Monkton, and the cause of his coming to the Hall.

As he left Garside's house, he walked rapidly along the garden walk, passed out of the gate, and made his way as quickly as possible by the narrow foot-way leading to the village. Within a quarter of a mile of the hostel, a small pathway led towards a defile, and it would have been difficult indeed, for one, unaccustomed to mountain ways, to walk steadily along it. On the side was a steep ravine, and from the mountain above, the descent was great, and commanded a full view of the landscape around. Here and there, the wild flowers pushed forward their pretty blossoms, and the odour from them scented the air. Small streamlets gushed in rills from the rocks above, and fell gently down their sides, sparkling with the sunbeams slanting upon them. All was peaceful about, for the sky was cloudless, and the valley, and pasturage, and trees, with the laurestinus and other shrubs, studded the place beautifully. Melvil's heart was gladdened under the effect of the morning sun, and the scenery,

diversified as it was, and he stepped on with a firm foot, and a more lightened spirit, than he had felt for some years. Oh ! what a load of anguish is oftentimes subdued, under the effect of a walk in the country. If the day be fine, and the season advancing, all nature seems to smile upon the pedestrian, and however disheartened he may have been, when he set out upon the morning's lounge, he feels a gladsome smile pass over the face, and insensibly warms under the influence of the beautiful scenery scattered luxuriantly before him. We have passed through many anxieties ourselves, and such sensations of gratitude and delight have passed like a radiant sunbeam over the troubled spirit, and smoothed down many asperities to which all mortal creatures must bend ; but with thankfulness for the innumerable blessings given to man, if he has but the intellect to comprehend and to enjoy them.

This little digression, for which we have to

ask pardon from the reader, somewhat interrupts our account of Melvil's walk, but he had passed steadily along the path-way, and to the right of which, and embosomed in ever-greens, was a small, unpretending cottage, somewhat like the one we have described, inhabited by Garnde, but much smaller, and of infinitely less pretence. To this cottage, then, did Melvil wend his way ;—looking over a small gate, he saw a female figure resting, who, the moment she beheld him, opened it, ran towards him with a rapid pace, and, on reaching him, flung herself into his arms. It was Alice ! poor Alice !”

“ Well, dearest !” said her father ; “ I have been long absent ; and I told you to be ready to meet me in the morning. Ah ! Mary, you look well after your charge, I see.”

This was spoken to a steady-looking young woman, who had rapidly followed Alice, but was almost breathless from the exertion she had made to catch up her young mistress.

"Yes, sir," the girl replied, "Thomas and I have kept a good look out, and followed your orders always."

"You are a good girl," said Melvil, "a very good girl; and I feel sure you will always be attentive to my wishes."

"I shall, sir, depend upon it," replied the girl.

Melvil stooped down, and kissed his daughter's cheek, and there was a tear stealing down it, and a pensive expression about the features not very common to them.

"How now, dearest? what distresses you? has Mary been scolding you?"

Alice looked up mournfully in her father's face, and replied—

"I have had a dream, daddy Will—a terrible dream. I saw *him* pass along a dark road—he was smiling, and the birds were singing, but there were two dark birds, like ravens. They hid themselves behind the trees, and watched him; he didn't see them, daddy Will,

but Alice did, and they were armed, and looked fierce and angry, as they watched him !”

“Who did they watch?” asked Melvil, kindly, and again kissing her, taking her hand within his; “who was passing along the dark road?”

“Oh !” she replied, quickly, and with more vivacity in her voice, “it was Wilfred they watched, daddy Will. He, who was with us in the cave—the *Cavalier* who was wounded. I have never been happy since he left us—never ! I loved him very, very much indeed. He was kind to poor Alice, and Alice likes those who are kind to her.”

These remarks startled Melvil—he had, for some time, observed great despondency about her, and it was now accounted for.

“Poor girl,” he thought, “how natural it is to love those who love us, and how great is the vacancy in the heart when *the chair* is no longer at the domestic fire-side, which

had been filled by a near and dear one, never, to occupy it again."

He was also uneasy at her dream. She had no idea that Wilfred was so near, and this, coupled with the struggle he had heard of at Garside's, relative to the attack upon Agnes, made him suspicious that some evil was brewing, and he resolved to be on the alert. The pathway leading to the village from the surgeon's was lonely enough—on each side were thick shrubs, where any one could readily conceal himself, and pounce upon an unsuspecting traveller. The covert that would conceal a villain, would ensconce an honest man, and he resolved that Wilfred's passage to the village should be watched quite as narrowly, as it would be by the most skulking of the scoundrel tribe.

Melvil turned upon his child a look of the most affectionate kind, but it was not without a pang of regret that she should have experienced such feeling respecting Wilfred.

"My child—my darling, my much beloved Alice—no one possessing the commonest feelings of our nature could be unkind to such as you. You would be beloved by every one."

"Not by *him*, daddy Will—not by *him*—he loves the battle field—he thinks not of poor Alice, but I love him dearly—I see him by night and by day. Sometimes we walk along some spot enamelled by the most beautiful flowers—I love flowers, oh! very much—they speak to Alice as she passes by them. Sometimes he is covered with smoke and flame—the drums rattle, and the guns roar, and the soldiers shout out! Then, he comes forth, and looks kindly upon Alice. Last night he frowned, and his face was dark, and then became pale, and the blood-streak marked the forehead. Oh! daddy Will, I was very frightened, and hid my face beneath my pillow."

"You must not be terrified by dreams—they generally run counter to our imagination.

Come, dear, be cheerful; lean on me, and let us go in. Be not afraid—Wilfred shall be guarded against mischief—I will take care he comes to no evil.”

The poor girl looked up at her father with a grateful smile, and tears again rolled down her cheeks upon this assurance. They appeared to sooth her mind greatly, which he was pleased to observe, though he was sorely oppressed with trouble to hear the affectionate expressions she lavished upon Wilfred, whose heart he knew was bound up with that of another; and had it not been so, her demented condition must have been a barrier to any love-token or affection from any one; save *that* love which the kind heart abundantly lavishes upon such afflicted beings, from sheer sorrow, and which is shewn by respectful affection. This, no doubt, Wilfred had shewn her when in the cave. Melvil knew his kindness of heart, and that he would feel pity for one so nearly allied

to him, and who was an interesting, but lamentable wreck of womankind.

Now and then Alice would mistake his name, and call him "Frederic," and fancy that he was her first-love. She would again and again wander and talk to him, as if he were bodily visible, and upbraid him haughtily for negligence, and remaining away so long. All this the servant mentioned to her master, and his heart was torn by the information. Alice looked way-worn and spirit-broken, and a manifest change had lately been apparent. Her cheerfulness and vivacity had fled, and a blank and unhappy expression became visible on the features. He passed his arm gently round her waist, and bore her towards the cottage, and, by degrees, he soothed and comforted her disturbed spirit.

CHAPTER XIII.

Andromache.—My dreams will, sure, prove ominous to-day.

Troilus and Cressida.

THE morning had been a lovely one, but as the day advanced, dark and frowning clouds hung in masses over the mountain ridges. Now and then a lightning flash darted forth, and the thunder rolled ominously in the distance. As the evening drew towards its close, the flashes were more intensely vivid, and the deep boomings which followed them betokened a heavy storm.

In the lowlands these visitations are less fearful, and not so common, but in more mountainous regions they are severely felt, and make their appearance almost as sudden as an avalanche falls, and the mischief which ensues is often serious.

Alice felt more than usually alarmed at the elemental strife, and the rain, which fell in torrents, joined with the lightning and thunderbursts, and darkness made the struggle of nature more terrible. Her dream was vividly remembered. It was such a storm she saw; and when it had passed away, the heavens were brightened, and the sun was shining, and the birds carolling. The darkness had faded before the sunlight, and all seemed bright and clear. Dreams are usually confused, and the mystery of sleep incomprehensible. It now and then happens, that during that temporary and death-like oblivion, which appears absolutely necessary to sustain vitality in vigorous action, the phantasies of the brain assume

a form and character startling enough, bringing scenes to our view, almost as clearly, as if they were actually before the eye.

This had been the case with the dream of Alice, and she shuddered as the storm raged, and clung closely to her father's bosom. He soothed her as well as he could, but her terror was so great, that she cowered before the flashes, as if she expected each one was laden with destruction. He had never known her terrified before; her mountain life for the last two years had made her familiar with these natural phenomena, but he himself felt nervous and agitated, as he remembered the purport of her dream, and also knew that Wilfred was to leave Garside to-night, and would have to travel just over such a spot as she had beheld and mentioned to him. He looked upon his demented child with strong emotion, which was painful to endure, as he endeavoured to restrain the deep feelings oppress-

ing him, lest it should be observed, and add to her terror."

"Alice, dear—Alice, I say—look up—it is only me—your father—no one is near to hurt you. Surely you have seen such storms before, and I never knew you frightened."

She scarcely seemed to understand what he said, but looked up at him with the most evident horror depicted on her features, and shook, as does the aspen leaf, under the slightest breath of air.

"Hark!" she exclaimed, "I hear his foot—I see him—yes, dearest, I see you—have a care—look about—you are watched. Ah!" she exclaimed, with a shriek, and elinging closely and convulsively to Melvil, "there are the night-birds—there are the ravens—the murderers! You shall not hurt him—no, no, no, no. How the sun shines—and the birds, too, how sweetly they sing—come, come, come to me—come to Alice, and live in her bosom, and in her love!"

There was a mingled tone of alarm and affection in this rhapsody, and her disease had clearly assumed another form, in which love for Wilfred formed a part. The wildness and rapidity of the storm had now passed away, and the heavens were brighter, and the stars peeped forth here and there, and, by degrees, the canopy above was studded with them, and the moon was gradually rising from her bed to cast light upon the recently darkened earth.

As nature became more tranquil so did the poor girl, and she exclaimed, in a more joyous strain, as if addressing some one—

“I have sweet scented flowers for you. See there, see there! Don’t they look pretty? They were gathered for you, dear, when the dew was on them, and they smelt freshly, and looked beautifully. Look then—avoid the narrow path—take the open road, and Alice will come and meet you, and drive away the

ravens who track your path. Do dear—see, see, Alice comes!”

Before Melvil could detain her, indeed before he had the slightest idea what her intentions were, she had dashed through the open door down the walk, bounded over the low gate, and with step defying pursuit, swept like an antelope up the hill, taking the path Melvil had but recently taken himself when he came to the cottage. He took down a brace of pistols hanging over the fire-place, when telling the girl to shut the house closely, followed with vigorous and rapid steps the road Alice, he knew, would take, as leading her to the spot he supposed she would seek.

Upon the departure of Melvil, Wilfred felt a sensation of regret pass over his mind, which was most distressing. Garside had been summoned upon an urgent case, and he was left to his own reflections, but they were by no means pleasing ones. It must be some

time before he beheld Agnes again, and to leave her in this uncertain state, perplexed him greatly. He had, however, too much respect for Garside to act contrary to his wishes, and the day insensibly crept on, with his mind in no degree smoothed down by being left alone.

The dinner was announced, and just as they were about to sit down, the surgeon's horse was heard clattering into the yard, and he shortly after walked into the room.

"Well, Maria, how is it with Miss Monkton? have you given what I ordered punctually? You made her, I presume, a nice wine posset?"

"Be assured, brother," replied Miss Garside, "I never run counter to your directions, and, in this instance, I should be more than punctual in doing all I can for one so interesting as Miss Agnes. Everything has been given, and she appears somewhat better."

Wilfred, upon this, looked up at Garside, as much as to say—"You hear she is better—can't I see her?" but, though the look was observed by the keen eye of the surgeon, he took no notice further than to smile upon him, and ask him to take his place at the table. The young man was inclined to receive this somewhat in dudgeon, but his better sense prevailed, and he quietly took his position.

Garside, somewhat fatigued by a long ride, made a hearty meal, and seemed to enjoy it, for his simple habits, and the constant exercise he was compelled to take to carry on his arduous duties, bestowed health, and that gave him an appetite to enjoy, with a keen relish, the plain but good meal placed before him by his thrifty yet liberal sister, who was by no means disinclined to follow his example.

Wilfred had little desire for food, for nothing impedes the natural interference with the

regular meal, nature requires, so much as nervous excitement, and this the young man endured with severity.

Though Garside took no open notice of Wilfred's expressive looks, he was not blind to his anxiety, and felt sorry he was compelled to appear harsh, simply because it was necessary for the safety of Agnes. His sister's report, however, had somewhat relieved him, and his heart relented so much, that he made up his mind, should Agnes, be more tranquil towards evening, and if her condition was improved, that Wilfred should see her before he departed. He felt his spirit receive an impetus as these thoughts ran through his brain and filling his glass he said—

“Come Wilfred—fill your glass with our Westmoreland ale—it has some pith and sinew and will make your heart pulsate more rapidly. Come, lad, it is our own brewing—genuine malt and hops and John Barleycorn himself never had a better sample! You

have a long ride before you, and should have something within to sustain the animal frame. If you will fall too I will make you an agreeable promise."

Wilfred's eyes brightened as this was said, and he commenced taking a scanty portion of the dinner, though he really had no desire for it, and what he did take was forced. After a few minutes he turned to Garside and said—

"You see, sir, I have obeyed your directions, though I freely confess it was much against my inclination. What agreeable promise am I to expect?"

"Why, just this," said the surgeon, "that should Miss Monkton be as well in the evening, as my sister states she was this morning, and I find the report correct, you shall have a few minutes' conversation with her before you pursue your journey; but it can only be for a few minutes. I would not have her unduly excited, and were it not, that she might

feel distressed at not seeing you, I should adhere to my first resolution."

"Oh! sir," said Wilfred, "you have relieved my mind greatly. Heaven alone knows how affairs may proceed and should it be my destiny to fall in the struggle which evidently approaches, it would be a consolation to know I had seen her, before I again join the regiment. I thank you a thousand times, and yet," continued the young man pausing a moment, "if you consider it will be injurious to Agnes, my feelings must give place to her safety."

"I admire your consideration," said Garside, "if I thought the slightest chance existed of that kind, I should say nay at once. You must see my great responsibility, not only as a medical man, but as a friend in whom so much confidence is placed. Both these points you must know are of the greatest importance."

"I cannot gainsay you," answered Wilfred,

"and should yield up my own feelings instantly, if Miss Monkton would be thrown back merely to gratify them."

"This does you credit," said Garside, "and it will enable me to effect your desire with more pleasure, for I am sure you will act discreetly."

Here Garside walked up to the window, and looked at the sky, and observed the clouds gathering in the west. He knew that towards evening, there would be a change of weather, and this knowledge he had gained from his acquaintance with the country in which he had been so long located. He again turned to Wilfred saying—

"I am fearful you will have a stormy journey unless you postpone your departure a few hours later in the evening. The changes here are sudden and violent and I have little doubt one of the storms peculiar to this country will be up ere long. I suppose you cannot remain until the evening?"

"My position would be a serious one if I did—I have but a week, and the journey to and fro occupies two thirds of the time. Indeed, I must make the best way I can even now, as the regiment has been steadily advancing towards London, and must soon reach it."

"Well, well," said Garside, "I have no desire to interfere with your duties—they are I am aware imperative, but I should have been happy if you could remain longer amongst us—The visit is but a brief one."

"I should be too happy to accept your friendly offer, could I do so with satisfaction, but I have no option. Go I must, and this night."

"If it must be so, it must," said Garside.

At this moment his sister came into the room, and he continued—

"Now, Maria, you must play the kind hostess—I shall not be away more than two hours; have tea ready soon after my

return, as our guest leaves us this evening."

"So early!" exclaimed Miss Garside. "The visit is but a short one, Mr. Wilfred."

"If I had the power," answered he, "it should be more extended, but my furlough only allows the time I have taken."

During these few words, Garside had left the room, and was mounted and off before they were well ended. Wilfred told Miss Garside that he would take a stroll in the garden, and possibly extend his walk beyond it, as he thought she might have some domestic duties to attend upon, and which her natural kindness of disposition towards her brother's friend might interfere with. She bowed in reply, and he took up his cap and went forth.

The country above the village of Monkton was bold, and in many places barren, but close to the Hall and for some distance around it, the scenery was very beautiful. Hill rose above hill, and valley beneath valley, and then

a wide and open pasturage for cattle extended some distance. The brightness of the day had vanished, and the light was almost hidden by clouds, which hung above, and gradually clustered together, resting as they appeared to do, upon the mountain tops. There was a wild grandeur about their shapes, which was more distinctly to be observed, owing to the few patches of light, still apparent, through which the sun-beams occasionally were stealing in slight streaks of light, but as immediately to fade away. The feeling upon the senses was an oppressive one, and Wilfred was scarcely able to endure the weight of the atmosphere, which was close and distressing. He passed from the garden, and walked towards the spot where he had met Agnes on the previous morning.

As he advanced towards the tree, he thought he beheld two or more dark figures at some distance watching him, and he stopped awhile and looked earnestly towards them, but they

no doubt saw him, as they vanished behind the shelter afforded by the brushwood. There was an awful stillness about—that peculiar and almost deathlike silence, which usually precedes a storm—not a leaf moved—not a bird could be heard singing its evening song, and those hovering in the air appeared scared by its approach, and flew about they scarcely knew whither. This silence so unusual had a powerful effect upon the young man's spirit, and a sensation of loneliness, and desolation was felt—all his uncertain career—all his hopes of prosperity in this life seemed like the gloomy appearance of the sky, holding forth no star even to shine upon his future prospects. There are times when the human heart, however firm, sinks under the depressing influence of worldly anxiety—when the mind itself is dark, and scarcely able to endure the chaotic images which involuntarily throng the brain. If it were not for higher aspirations, and a teaching more than mortal, man would often-

times sink beneath sensations so distressing. Wilfred endeavoured to shake off the depressing influences of the sky. The place so lovely on the preceding day, was no longer so. Then Agnes was beneath the beech-trees, and the scenic illusion had vanished with her absence. Wilfred turned, and a deep sigh passed involuntarily from him, as he walked towards Garside's pretty cottage, for there he knew the beloved one was living—the pole star of his worldly hopes, and whose happiness was the one main spring of his existence. There was now but one faint streak of light in the sky, and which was gradually being absorbed by the ominous darkness. He looked upon it earnestly, and as he walked steadily onward, it gradually faded away leaving nothing but profound gloom. Garside had just reached the house, as Wilfred came to the gate, and he advised him to seek shelter at once. Presently a lightning flash was seen—then another and another, followed by thunder-claps

at a distance, and large and wide-apart drops of rain. He had scarcely gained the threshold when the flood-gates of the heavens were opened, and the rain came down with drenching power. The whole scene was fearful but magnificent, as watched from the cottage window, by Garside's orders, until the lights had been brought in, and the shutters closed and curtains drawn, as his sister was always frightened at this struggle of the elements, and he had himself thought it necessary to see Miss Monkton, who might also be terrified at the sudden change. He found her much more composed than he had expected; by his sister's aid she was up and dressed, and as he came into the room, she asked whether Wilfred was gone, as if dreading to hear that he was, and probably out in the storm. Garside answered in the negative, and inquired if she felt able to join the tea-table, or if she would have some sent up into her room. She told him that she would rather come down

for a short time, when finding her in this tram of mind he offered his arm. By his help she managed readily to reach the parlour, where Wilfred was sitting before the fire in no very happy mood. The moment the door was opened and he saw who it was, his eye brightened; he sprang up, offering his hand and led her tenderly towards the sofa close to the fire, saying—

“This is indeed an unexpected pleasure, dear Agnes, and one I was scarcely prepared for. Oh! how happy I am to think I was so near to help you in the last night’s emergency—It is very kind of you to come down, very kind indeed. I am fully sensible of your services, dear sir,” he continued turning to Garside and shaking his hand warmly. “You are indeed a true friend.”

“The shock was sudden, and I confess it frightened me much,” said Agnes, “and but for your prompt aid I might not be here to tender you my warmest thanks.”

"I am sure of this," said the surgeon, "that the unexpected visit of Wilfred was most fortunate, and the scoundrels little suspected when they gulled me by a pretended sick-call they were doomed to be foiled. You are aware, my dear young lady, that our guest leaves us almost directly—at any rate when the storm is over, and which being so loud and sudden seldom lasts long."

"Yes, sir," replied Agnes in a melancholy tone of voice, "and I need scarcely say how much I regret it."

"A thousand thanks, dearest one," said Wilfred emphatically and taking her passive hand which he covered with kisses, not heeding the crimson suffusion covering her face, "a thousand thanks for those few but dear words. I shall leave with regret, but it is much softened down by this little interview."

"That's manly," said Garside, "to give way foolishly to our feelings when duty in-

terferes is rank folly, and I believe you have too much sense to make the parting for awhile more distressing to our kind young friend. I had expected this from you, Wilfred, and I am glad I have not been disappointed. Where have you stabled your horse?"

"At the hostel close by," replied Wilfred.

"Shall I send my servant for it, when the storm passes?" asked Garside.

"By no means, sir," replied Wilfred, "it is but a short walk and a few minutes will compass it. I will not give you this trouble, as I must ride some miles before the morning; so that I may reach a friend, who will accompany me in a conveyance, and who has like myself a furlough about to expire—We shall have to cross the country, to reach the regiment to which I belong, now slowly marching towards London."

"I will just step to the door," said Garside,

"and see how the sky looks, for I hear nothing either of rain or thunder."

"If both were to continue," said Wilfred, "go I must, and I have a stout useful cloak which will keep off a heavy fall."

"It must be a stout one, indeed," said Garside, "to repel such a torrent as we have had. No weaver ever wove cloth that could stand such a tempest, as the one I think has now passed." However, I will look out, and report."

Upon this he left the room. Wilfred then stepped up to Miss Garside, shook her cordially by the hand, and thanked her for her hospitality. He then turned to Agnes, who was pale and trembling, and neither was Wilfred much less agitated. He stood for a moment or so, before he could bring himself to say farewell—a short word, it is true, but one of the most painful that passes human lips, when about to leave a beloved object. Agnes looked up beseechingly, and her eyes were

filled with tears, when Wilfred clasped her hands, and imprinted upon her lips and forehead repeated kisses. He found she was tottering, and he led her to the sofa; he beckoned Miss Garside towards him, and placing the hand of Miss Monkton within hers, he exclaimed, as he hastily left the room—

“May Heaven bless and preserve you both!”

CHAPTER XV.

Hamlet.—Thus conscience does make cowards of us all.

Hamlet.

Act 3. Scene 1.

Cassius.—Why, now, blow, wind ; swell billow ; and swim
bark !

The storm is up, and all is on the hazard.

Julius Cæsar.

Act 5. Scene 1.

WE must now turn the reader's attention to the cave in the valley. Within it were about a dozen men, ill-favoured in feature most of them, and the majority polishing up swords and fire-arms—men of a very different charac-

ter to those who were there, when we first described it, and whom the uncertain state of the social fabric had sent forth, to gain a livelihood as they best could, by pillage, or by any means a freebooter's life could procure..

At a table close to the mouth of this cavern, were our two friends the Musqueteers, Bernard and Grimstone, the latter of whom, had he fallen into better company, might have been a useful member of society. He had, however, dipped his hands into the cup of sin, and plunged them deeper into it, as he advanced in his career. They were holding close conversation, so as not to be overheard by their companions, and no longer wore the military costume of Cromwell's Musqueteers, but were dressed in garments of any form and fashion, which chance threw in their way. Their beards and moustaches had been allowed to grow, and they gave to Bernard a fierce expression, the brutality and sensual character of his features requiring little else, to make him a fitting in-

mate for the lair of some wild beast. The features of Grimstone were prepossessing, and these additions to the face rather improved it, than otherwise ; had he worn the sacerdotal garment, he might have passed for some Jewish rabbi, as his countenance was bronzed and handsome, and had a tinge of the oriental character about it.

"Is there a chance then?" asked Grimstone.

"There is," replied Bernard, "and a good one. I have watched the cottage of the surgeon, and there I gained nothing. The manservant is trustworthy, and must not be tampered with. I enquired of the ostler at Dame Margery's, and find that the Cavalier's horse is stabled there, and that he leaves about twilight. He must, no doubt, as the nearest way, pass the foot-road, beside which, we shall have ample shelter for hiding, and he can be stopped."

"Suppose he is accompanied by any one,"

said Grimstone. "The Cavalier is stout and able at his weapons, and singly would make a stubborn resistance, but aided, a successful one."

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared out Bernard, forgetting at the moment he had listeners, and who each turned, upon the brutal laugh, to see what caused it. He observed that he was noticed, and said quickly—

"Why do you suppose I would have him assailed openly—No, no. He shall be picked off like a rook, and the aim shall be this time a good one—steady, and true to the mark!"

"You speak very coolly about the matter," said Grimstone; "but I am not so hot upon it as you are. The young man has had one lucky escape, and I do not feel desirous of being a participator in a second attack."

"Then you decline assisting me, and of course lose the reward?" asked Bernard.

This home question appeared to puzzle Grim-

stone, and he hardly knew how to answer it. The intended *murder*, for it was evident Bernard meant that, and nothing less, he was by no means anxious to aid,—but the crowns—aye, the crowns—the money—the curse—the bane, which leads man onward amidst the depths of sin! There was the stumbling-block, and Bernard saw by his perplexed features, that he had hit the point, and fixed his companion past help of receding.

“You do not answer,” said Bernard. “Come, no hanging back now—say the word, aye or nay, so that I may seek out some one less likely to be coy, and divide the spoil with him—half a thousand crowns, and no less!”

“If you succeed, I suppose?” said Grimstone.

“Certainly,” replied Bernard, “that is the compact. Should we fail, we have but a cool hundred; but we will *not* fail. The bird will fall into the fowler’s net, and when dead, we can have him hurled over one of the ravines,

where he will be found by the crows and birds of prey."

"But the bones may be discovered, and be a witness against us," said Grimstone.

"Yes," replied Bernard, with the utmost composure; "bones *may* be found, but it would be no easy matter to prove *whose* bones they were. Besides, we should be in some other land, enjoying our spoil, and ready for other adventures."

Grimstone looked hard at Bernard, and was astonished at the cool and cruel manner in which he spoke. He was, however, too far linked in with him, and had no help, but to assist in the nefarious business—besides, the five hundred crowns loomed in the distance! He shuddered as he pondered awhile, and fancied he beheld some dark figure beckoning him on, with a grim smile, and features fiend-like in their expression. He shook himself, as a person would do, to overcome the night-mare, or as Sinbad, did to shake off the old man

from his shoulders. There was, however, a dull, heavy feeling about the heart—a sense of oppression and of coming evil; and courageous as he undoubtedly was, he felt cowed and irresolute as to what he should do. There was little time allowed for reflection, for Bernard's eyes were upon him, vulpine in their glance, and he made up his mind what to say.

"I don't like the business at all, Bernard, but I will go hand-in-hand with you. You shall not have it to say, that Ralph Grimstone shirked a friend, when his help was required. I am with you in this matter."

"I am glad you have decided thus—one word about the crowns, and dismal Will would have been my companion. He would shoot a man down, with as little compunction as the sportsman would a wildfowl—only let him know the amount to be given for the work, and he asks no more questions."

"I never could comprehend," said Grimstone, fixing his elbows upon the table, and

leaning his face upon them, "what object Master Snuffle has in view in seeking this young man's life. Can you tell me?"

"Not I," replied Bernard. "A strong reason, no doubt—one that upheaves the social fabric—that pushes us on to seek a fortune. With it, we can do much in this world—without it, nothing. Money—I dare say—he is paid by some one, and handsomely too, and makes a hard bargain with us to carry out his wish. That's all I have to say, in answer to your question. What consequence is it to you?"

"Why, little enough," said Grimstone, "only I like to know all I can."

"You are as curious, I suppose," replied Bernard, "as Dame Margery, and your tongue perhaps would run as glibly, were I to tell you. I know nothing of Master Snuffle's intentions, neither do I care."

"Humph!" growled out Ralph, and though he did not say it, he felt pretty certain that

Bernard knew more than he chose to avow, and that he was making a market of his secret, just as Snuffle was of him.

"Why, you growl like a chained mastiff," said Bernard, "you must be muzzled; man, or you may bite. What's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing! I was thinking, that's all," replied Grimstone.

"What may I offer for your thoughts?" asked Bernard.

"You shall have them free," answered the other, "they were just these, and no more. That, although I believe you to be one of the most cold-blooded scoundrels upon the face of this earth, yet, that Master Snuffle tops you. He uses us both, and, like the monkey in the fable, will eat the chesnuts, and very likely leave us to burn our fingers."

"Upon my life," said Bernard, "you are very full of your compliments, and I ought to stand up and make a bow to you. I can only tell you, that if Master Snuffle were to play me

false, I would cut his weasand without the slightest scruple. No, no, Ralph, I have him fast enough, and can hang him whenever I choose."

"I am very glad to find you are so well satisfied," replied Grimstone, "but he is a crafty fellow, and may outreach you. Under his sanctified look, and the mask of religion he puts on, he may be a match for the very ——"

"*Old gentleman*, I suppose you mean to say, speaking civilly—but leave him to me, and don't worry about such matters. I tell you again, and for the last time, that I could link Master Snuffle's neck in a noose, from which he would not very easily extricate himself, and *that* he knows well enough. The reward is safe, if we can but earn it. There is but one person I *fear*, but he is, fortunately, away."

"Will-o'-the-Waste, I suppose you mean, but don't be too sure of that, if I am not very

much mistaken, I saw his face when I was on the prow, some day or two since. He wore another habit, but the features are too well marked to be readily forgotten."

"Why, you never saw him, Grimstone—you must be mistaken!" said Bernard, looking pale.

"Yes I have—he passed from Dame Margery's one night, as I was standing at the door—the moonlight fell upon his face, and from all I heard of him, he was the man, and no other."

"You should have stopped him," said Bernard, hastily.

"I should, if I could—but the sudden glance staggered me, and he fled with such haste, and I was so astounded, that before I could recover myself, he was far ahead. He stalked along like some mountain spirit."

"I cannot wonder at your not catching him," said Bernard, "he gave me a chase once, and I shall not soon forget it—nay, when I

thought I had him, he sunk into the earth. I am more afraid of him than fifty Snuffles, and my arm has scarcely recovered the blow he gave me, some months ago. Oh! if I had him but once within musket range, I would wager my life, he never troubled us again."

"You will have some difficulty then," said Grimstone, "for, unless he stood still for a steady aim, you would miss him to a certainty. I never saw a man take such a stride in my life—camel never took a longer one. You might as well attempt to seize a stag when at speed."

"The best stag has been brought to bay by a musket bullet," exclaimed Bernard, with a grim smile, "and Will-o'-the-Waste doesn't bear a charmed life."

"I hardly know what to think about it," said Grimstone, "our ventures in the valley, were by no means unfavourable to such an opinion, for he certainly outwitted us all in a masterly manner."

"Ah!" replied Bernard, pondering awhile, "he did do so, that's certain, but I have little faith in witchcraft, so far as the folks in the cave were concerned. To be sure, the place was left without the slightest thing in it, but men, and not demons, had inhabited it; however, we are straying from our point. Be ready beneath the shelter I have mentioned, just before dusk, and you will find me at my post, to the left hand side, so that we can see the cavalier as he ascends the hill, and thus have a steady mark. We have him now, Grimstone, and then, for the *thousand crowns*!"

"You shall be seconded," replied Grimstone, "I will be there at the time appointed."

Though he had some doubts whether he should ever receive the share of the money. Bernard now moved away, and merely said—

"Don't forget—just before dusk!"

"No, no!" said Grimstone, "I shall be ready, depend upon it; if I promise, I perform, at twilight I am there, snugly enshrouded."

It often happens that a word heedlessly spoken, becomes literally true, and Grimstone was not much out of his reckoning, as to the snug position he would have ; but whether he might emerge from it was another affair. They both got up, and Grimstone strolled out into the valley, while Bernard joined his companions in the cave.

Grimstone looked up at the sky, for a sudden darkness was gradually stealing over the earth, and he knew that a storm was brewing, and which, ere long, would come crashing down. He sauntered backward and forward scarcely knowing how to wile away the time, a thousand conflicting images passing through his mind. Days, hours, and years came stealing up, and his heart felt heavy, when he recollected the earlier period of his life ; and how basely he had used that invaluable time, which his parents had pointed out, as so important to be filled with honour. How had he carried out their fond injunctions,

given as they generally are, for the good of those who are about to thread the stormy world? His present position told, how little he had attended to their advice, and a deep throb of anguish burst from his bosom, when he reflected upon his present lost condition, for lost it was. There had been once a prospect of good, but years of crime and debauchery washed away all shame, and he was, he felt, an outcast from the pale of his more virtuous fellow-men. Hope he had none—despair, reckless, furious despair, had taken possession of him, and he thought but of the past, and not of the future. His brain was in a whirl, for a feeling of evil was apparent, and all the pangs which invariably beset the path of the wicked, were wringing his heart. He dashed aside a few tear-drops which had long been alien to him, and making a desperate effort, seemed to cast away at once, and for ever, all fear of present or future consequences.

Bernard had now joined him, and he almost

felt as he approached, that the *Evil Spirit* was near, and ready to lead him to destruction.

"The time approaches," said Bernard, "we must be on the alert. Come, come, let us move—the fusees are loaded and primed, and I have placed them under the ledge of one of the rocks, where we must pass. Are you ready?"

"Ready!" exclaimed Grimstone starting a few paces, and scarcely appearing to understand the question, for he repeated the word "Ready! Why, yes, no—what do you say?"

"What do I say?" replied Bernard, "why, are you crazed, Grimstone, that you ask such a question?"

"Not quite," said Grimstone, "but it would be better if I were, for to go out thus, to murder a fellow creature, who has not injured me, should be enough to madden any one. However, I am pledged to you and will follow—Lead on."

"You are becoming very tender hearted on a sudden, Master Grimstone, you were not generally so very scrupulous."

"I tell you what, Bernard—laugh at me—jeer me as you please, but I have a sensation of coming evil, such as I never felt before, and had I not pledged myself to you, would leave you to do the work singly."

He had scarcely spoken the last word, when a vivid lightning flash ran along the hill above them, and was soon followed by a thunder-clap.

"Hilloa !" exclaimed Bernard, with a laugh almost of defiance. "We shall have a storm upon us, see how the dark masses of clouds move, and are gradually gathering for a battle !"

Another flash, and a second thunder clap, louder than the first, followed, and then came the rain, in large drops, nearly blinding Bernard, one of them falling in his eye, as he looked upward.

"Come, come," he continued "this won't do we must seek a shelter, or we shall be drenched to the skin."

The other mechanically did what he was required to do, and in a few moments they were safely under shelter, beneath a deep recess in a rock above them; and as the wind blew in the direction of the cave, screened them from the rain, which now came down in torrents. The wind roared—the lightning flashed, and the booming thunder rolled above them, and it appeared every time it crashed, as if the rocks would be rent in twain, and fall down, crushing them to pieces. Had Grimstone's mind been in a proper train for truthful thoughts, he would have learnt a lesson from the jarring elements; but the lightning, vivid as it was, and dancing as it did, along the mountains on the opposite side of the valley to where they sat, beautifully as it lit up the scenery above and around, made no further impression, than to throw him into a half-stupor, from which he was

roused by Bernard's shaking him by the shoulder, and saying—

“The rain is ceasing—come, come, we must ascend the mountains, or the rills swollen by the storm, will for a while be torrents, and the valley partially flooded with the other lowlands, and we may be submerged. Hilloa ! man, are you asleep ?”

This question was accompanied by a rough pull, and Grimstone, roused by it, mechanically started up. To any one fully sensible of the wonderful machinery which pervades the Universe, the scene presenting itself became magnificently grand, if we may use the double expression. The heavy clouds had sailed away in dark and frowning masses towards the east, and the canopy above was brightly and thickly studded with glittering stars, and the moon shining amidst the heavens, gleaming on all sides upon the waters, pouring from the crannies in the rocks, and which, as Bernard said, were for a while small cataracts ! The way was

slippery from the moisture, and had not the pathway been well known to them both, they might have fallen headlong from the mountains, and been dashed to atoms.

The sudden change, was not unlike the work upon which they were bound. Peaceful on the one hand—violent on the other. The unfortunate victim of their murderous intention, was just about leaving the cottage of Garside with a smiling face, and a lighter heart, dreaming not of the danger which beset him ; while the assassins were climbing the opposite edge of the mountain, to fix themselves in a position, most favourable for their murderous intentions.

CHAPTER XV.

Antony—Fall not a tear, I say ; one of them rates
All that is won and lost : give me a kiss ;
Even this repays me.

Antony and Cleopatra.

WILFRED, when he departed from Garside's house, was heavy hearted, as any one would be, upon leaving the object of his love ; but much of the grief that would have been felt, was lessened, by his interview with Agnes.

The night was a clear and bright one, and after the heavy storm was lovely to behold.

The mountain ridges were tipped by the light of the moon, and he had to spring over several rivulets, recently made by the heavy rain. This he accomplished easily, for he was young and active, and his heart was light, and his spirits were more buoyant than they would have been, had he left the surgeon's house, without one parting word.

Each side of the path was fringed with brushwood, which became thicker as he began gradually to ascend it, and it led more directly to the hostelry, which Garside had directed him to take, instead of keeping the road way, making a considerable saving in the distance he had to traverse. He had accomplished the ascent of the hill about a third, when he stopped awhile, as he fancied he heard the shrill notes of fifes, and the distant roll of drums, but the sounds passed away as the wind freshened, and again fell upon the ear after a few seconds. He then heard, stopping (again to listen attentively,) military music, and

he was satisfied that a body of soldiers could not be far off.

Could it be the array of General Monck? If so, his own regiment, the *Coldstreams*, would be there, and his immediate departure not required, as he could join at once, should such fortunately be the case. It was certainly not the most direct road towards the metropolis, but it might have been chosen for particular reasons, and to screen the leader's intention until a favourable opportunity offered. After waiting some time, Wilfred made an onward move, and had just reached the rise of the hill, when a female figure rushed almost breathless towards him, and flung herself sobbing upon his bosom. He had no time to release himself from the embrace, for at the same moment a musket shot was heard, when the female uttering a loud and agonizing shriek, fell backwards, dragging him along with her to the ground. As they were falling, another shot was heard, but it passed harmlessly beside or

above them, though evidently intended for his destruction, had he remained standing where he was. This he should have done for a few moments, as he was anxious to glance backwards, to ascertain whether any large military body was to be seen, and which he could readily have observed, for the moonlight being powerful, it would gleam brightly on the arms and accoutrements.

The grasp in which he was held gradually relaxed, and he was enabled to extricate himself, and kneel beside the unfortunate one, who evidently had received the ball intended for himself, and which in passing through her body had taken a slanting direction, and wounded him in the left shoulder, as he felt a sharp tap, and a stinging sensation at the same time. He was, however, able to raise her from the ground, and place her head upon his knee, though he felt sure the wound was beyond human aid, as blood was oozing fast from the breast, and had already soaked the

bosom and front of the white dress with its crimson stain. Before he could well examine the features, which were pallid and ghastly, a man rushed up the same pathway he had recently taken, with headlong speed, and casting a wild and hurried glance around, and seeing him kneeling in the footway, came at once towards them, exclaiming in a tone of the bitterest anguish :—

“ Alice ! Alice ! how came you to leave me ?”

The voice appeared to rouse her, for it *was* Alice, she opened her eyes slightly and endeavoured to raise herself, though this was an effort evidently beyond her remaining strength.

Wilfred plainly saw that the shot had been a mortal one ; so sudden had been the whole affair, that he felt bewildered as, Melvil rushed to the other side, and assisted in supporting his dying child. The scene was, indeed, a painful and most pitiful one, for the poor young woman who was failing under the death

grasp, looked first upon one and then upon the other, saying, in feeble accents—

“ Kiss me father,” which he did, while tears rolled down his cheeks, his more violent emotions being pent up within, so that they might not distress her, or enbitter the last moments. She then looked up at Wilfred, and endeavoured with her glazed and failing vision to scan his features—she passed her left hand amidst his hair—the gaze was an anxious and most painful one to behold—for a moment and more, it was fixed earnestly upon him—

“ Kiss me,” she said “ dearest Frederic—no—no—Wilfred ! you kiss me—it will be the first and the last—I have——saved you !”

He looked at Melvil, who seemed by his glance, as if he wished she should be obeyed. He stooped and bent his lips towards hers—Oh ! how cold—how deadly cold they were. She kissed him eagerly, when her head

drooped—a gentle sigh passed forth, and she fell back *dead*!

There was a profound silence—neither could speak—their grief was beyond expression. The terrible tragedy had been so sudden—was so awful, that the tongues of both were tied from sheer grief. They were only roused from this stupor by the sounds of fifes and drums, sweeping through the night air. Wilfred endeavoured to rise upon both knees, but the pain from the arm became now most acutely felt, and a faintness overcame him, as he endeavoured to stand erect—his senses were bewildered and were leaving him, and after a faint struggle and a deep sigh, he sank lifeless upon the corpse of Alice.

The fall of Wilfred awakened up the half paralysed faculties of Melvil, and he started to his feet. He passed his hand quickly over his forehead, and remained for a minute or more, as if he had received some stunning

blow, from which his intellects were scarcely recovered. He looked wildly around and about, and his glance fell upon the bodies beneath him. Military music was once more heard in a louder strain and much closer, and he fancied he could discover some large body of men advancing in close array. He shouted out in a deep and powerful voice—

“Help ! help ! for God’s sake help ! If you are Christian men, and hear, succour us on the instant. Help ! help !”

He then faltered—he staggered—the blow was too overwhelming even for his manly and powerful intellect. He struggled desperately to stand erect and maintain his foothold—it was beyond his power, and he, Melvil, the stout hearted, the bold and resolute man, fell prone on the earth, as helpless as an infant.

His vehement call for aid, however, was not lost, for one of the officers, followed by three or four of the men, rushed, under the impulse of

the moment, from the rocks, and rapidly advanced towards the spot from whence they supposed the call proceeded. As they gained the hill a man started up from the brushwood, and darted off as if terrified. The officer who held a fusee in his hand, levelled it and fired instantly—the shot was effectual, and the person whoever it was sprang a foot or more from the ground, fell forward, and then rolled headlong into the valley beneath.

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